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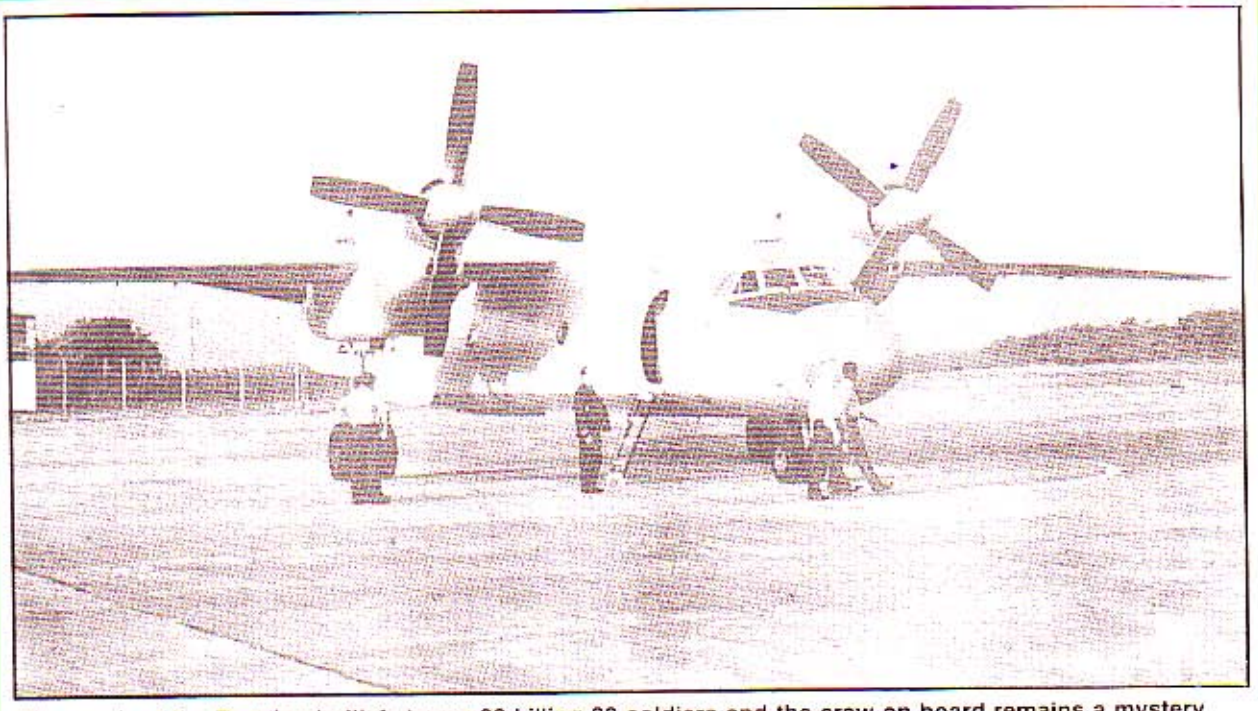

The crash of the Russian-built Antonov-32 killing 80 soldiers and the crew on board remains a mystery

★ The Case of the Floating Bodies

★ Last Chance for Peace

★ Nationalist Extremism and Political Moderation

★ Hijacking the 'Iris Moana'

★ 'Leave us alone to Decide Our Fate'

★ The Return of the Nightmare

★ The Politics of Territory, Border, and Settlements

★ The Great Escape

★ Assassination Plot?

★ Military Offensive in the North

★ Emergence of Economic Nationalism in India

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– Voltaire

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Return of the Nightmare

The Peoples Alliance government under the leadership of Chandrika Kumaratunga was returned to power on the promise to end the dark days of flagrant human rights abuses that characterised many years of rule by the previous regime. The measures it adopted after it assumed office to improve the human rights situation received justifiable acknowledgement and recognition from both local and international human rights organisations.

Even as the people were getting used to the idea that the nightmarish practice of government-sponsored death squads roaming around the country abducting, torturing and brutally killing them and leaving their bodies burning on streets, hanging from trees and floating in rivers was a thing of a bygone era, three months ago, mutilated and disfigured bodies began to float again in lakes and rivers around the capital reminiscent of the country's worst human rights nightmare. The phenomenon of death squads had returned.

At the beginning, it appeared difficult to place responsibility on anyone or any group. However, the manner in which these macabre killings were carried out and the methodology adopted to dispose of the bodies led one to the irresistible conclusion that behind these killings was an organised group which had substantial resources at its command.

The recent disclosures made by the Inspector General of the country's police service that it was elements within the Special Task Force of the Police and the Military Intelligence that was responsible for the brutal killings have had the effect of severely embarrassing the government and sullying its reputation. The audacity with which these elements chose to dump some of the bodies of their victims to float in the lake that surrounds the country's parliament demonstrated that they in fact wanted to embarrass the government.

The fact that the Inspector General of Police openly admitted that the killings were carried out at the STF headquarters after the victims being tortured and starved is itself a radical departure from past practice under the previous regime when everything was swept under the carpet with blanket denials. And the fact that many officers of the STF and Military Intelligence are already under custody and many more are under investigation would appear to indicate that the government is determined to get to the bottom of this brutality.

For many years the STF has been allowed to operate with a substantial degree of autonomy and unaccountability. During these years, the STF has been held responsible by human rights organisations for thousands of 'disappearances' particularly in the eastern province and during the height of the anti-JVP counter insurgency campaign in the south of the country.

The impunity with which they were allowed to continue with their criminal acts in the past has given them the confidence to continue in the same manner in carrying out illegal and indiscriminate arrests, torture those in custody and summarily execute them in secret and dump the victims' bodies in public. Addressing a recent meeting of senior police officers, President Kumaratunga said, 'Those who led the killer squads in the past are still serving in the force. If they get an opportunity, they would eliminate me and my Ministers.' This is a dangerous state of affairs for any country to be in.

While the government's action in bringing the STF under the control of the Inspector General of Police is welcome, the present investigation into the killings carried out at the STF headquarters must not be limited to the lower rungs of the force. It is hard to believe that those at the top were unaware of these brutalities that were being perpetrated under their own noses. They are accomplices in the crime either by participation or by turning a blind eye. Even if they claim that they were unaware of what was happening, then they are guilty of gross dereliction of their duty.

The government's commitment to the protection of the people is on trial on this issue. It must be unrelenting in its resolve to investigate and bring to justice everyone of those responsible irrespective of their positions.

NEWS REVIEW

★ Military Offensive

The much predicted government offensive in northern Jaffna was launched with 'Operation Handshake 2' on 12 September backed by an estimated 25,000 troops. Though the defense establishment claimed it as a limited operation to destroy LTTE's mortar positions in the vicinity of the Palaly military base, and secure it from Tiger attacks, reports indicate that the offensive is intended to capture more territory within the peninsula.

The LTTE's recent mortar fire on the strategic Palaly air base on 3 September created panic in defence circles who were under the impression that the runway and the airfield was out of the Tigers' range. The air force recently purchased Russian Antonov 32 aircraft fitted with anti-missile systems to dodge LTTE's stinger missiles. The area around Palaly was claimed to have been expanded during the July offensive to keep the Tigers at bay from the runway. But the mortar fire, however, proved that the airport continued to be vulnerable, defence analysts said.

There have been reports that heavy shelling directed from the Palaly base and the Karainagar naval base directed at populated areas of the peninsula has resulted in many civilian casualties and displacement of thousands of people. On 17 September the army claimed that the operation was still continuing and the forces were consolidating their positions in the newly captured areas.

They also claimed that the troops advanced about 10 kilometres south of Palaly and destroyed three LTTE bases at Punnalaikkadduwan, Erlalai and Mallakam.

The LTTE had previously warned the people of the impending offensive, and mounted a series of attacks in the eastern province where several army camps were closed and troops had reportedly been withdrawn to augment the northern offensive.

Though the deputy defence minister, Anuruddha Ratwatte dismissed reports of difference of opinion and cliques in the army, some defence columnists in Colombo recently wrote that there were different views on launching of an offensive against the Tigers in Jaffna before monsoon. One faction of the officers said that north-east monsoon would impede any major action by the army. They feel that monsoon would only be advantageous to the LTTE whose cadres were familiar with the weather conditions. The officers said any offensive against the Tigers should be launched well before the onset of the monsoon. A section of the top brass of army also feels that fresh supplies of arms and ammunition are yet to reach soldiers.

Defence analysts said the Sri Lankan navy, which has earlier taken most of the beating at the hands of the Sea Tigers, has been steadily losing its firepower. It lost at least five ships including a command ship and two Israeli made Dvoras.

The Plane Crash – 80 Killed

The military establishment suffered a major setback in its projected military offensive in northern Jaffna when one of its recently acquired Russian-built Antonov-32 military aircraft with about eighty-one soldiers, sailors and crew crashed into the sea on 13 September off the west coast of Sri Lanka. The aircraft fell 8,000 feet into the sea 23 miles off the coast, near Ja-ela, Negombo, killing all its passengers and crew.

The AN-32, bound for the Palali military base in northern Sri Lanka, had taken off from Ratmalana airport, seven miles south of Colombo, in driving rain when, within 10 minutes from take off, it disappeared from radar screens, said Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe, a military spokesman. The plane was carrying troops for a planned offensive in the north.

Nearly four hours after the plane disappeared, rescue aircraft and ships sighted an oil slick and floating cigarette cartons, but no wreckage was seen. Later it was confirmed that the plane was located at the bottom of the sea.

Sri Lanka had purchased three Antonov-32 planes fitted with anti-missile systems only a few months ago after Tigers had brought down two Avro aircraft with surface-to-air missiles.

Although there is much speculation, the cause of the crash has yet to be established and a court of inquiry has been appointed to undertake investigations. The pilot of the ill-fated plane was 33-year-old Captain Ranjan Rajasingham Pakianathan who joined the Air Force in 1981.

The short exchange between the pilot and the radar controller indicates that the pilot referred to a 'small problem with the instrument', and he 'would like to descend and get back to Ratmalana' and sought confirmation. Shortly thereafter the plane went off the screen. No distress radio message was received from the pilot.

Commenting on the probable cause of the crash, Director of Operations of the Sri Lanka Air Force, Commodore Jayalath Weerakkody told the reporters that no definite conclusion can be made at this point and that a Court of Inquiry had been appointed to go into the incident. He pointed out that the exchange between the ill-fated aircraft and the control centre moments before the crash suggests that the crash was due to bad weather conditions in the area coupled with the instrument problems the aircraft had reported shortly after take-off. The Pilot on being informed that there was a patch of bad weather ahead had indicated that he was returning to Ratmalana as he was having an instrument problem.

Weerakkody said the final air speed reported by the aircraft of 700 kilometres per hour far exceeded the air frame limitation of 540 kilometres per hour, which might have led to the crash. He ruled out the possibility that the aircraft was hit by missile fired by the Tigers. Answering suggestions of an explosion caused within the aircraft, Weerakkody said there was no evidence to suggest breaking in mid-air, in such situations the debris would be spread out over a distance. He said a helicopter and a Y-12 aircraft which had flown over the area where the plane is believed to have come down had only observed some cigarette boxes and clothing floating. The area has a depth of about 1000 feet and it is unlikely that anyone would have survived the crash.

Newspapers in Colombo have speculated that a bomb might have been planted in one of the four large boxes of 73 kg of cigarettes aboard the plane. They were taken to Ratmalana airport at 4am by two policemen – one Sinhalese and the other a Tamil – for use by policemen located at the Palaly airbase. The boxes were opened and checked thoroughly before being loaded into the plane. However, the background of the two policemen was being checked, Weerakkody said.

That the pilot carried a Tamil name gave rise to some mischievous reporting in some predictable newspapers in Colombo. Even suggestions such as that he undertook a suicide mission on behalf of the Tigers and that he held a party before the flight have been reported in these papers.

Amidst the unbearable pain, the pilot's family have also had to face insulting and distressing rumours. The aggrieved father of the pilot Ranjan Pakianathan said, 'We have been told that since Ranjan was a Tamil, he had crashed the plane on purpose. I think this is the worst insult that my

son can get, specially after sacrificing so much and finally even his life, for the country. Normally we would have treated all these comments as third rate gossip, but at this moment, with all the pain we are going through, it is unbearable.'

Denying the story of the alleged 'party' he had given 'to celebrate his first flight as Captain of the AN-32', his father said that the party was given by some others in connection with their promotion. This was not his first AN-32 flight, in fact, it was his third to be captained by him. If he was an LTTE man as suggested, he had more opportunities to do greater harm previously when very higherups, including Presidents not excluding the present President had travelled in planes piloted by him on several occasions.

The deputy defence minister, Col. Anuruddha Ratwatte was quoted by newspapers as saying that the crash was neither a case of sabotage nor an attack by the LTTE. The minister said that the aircraft had run into very bad weather and the instruments would have failed referring to the pilot's message before the crash to the radar controller. Either the plane went out of control or there was an engine failure, the minister said adding that all aspects of the disaster were being probed. The pilot had told the control about failing instruments, the minister said.

Sri Lanka has asked India and other unidentified foreign governments to help retrieve the remains of the crashed plane which is reported to be lodged on the sea-bed, according to an air force spokesman.

Civil Aviation Suspended

Sri Lanka has suspended all domestic civilian, commercial and training flights as from 15 September. It was claimed by government spokesman that this measure had been taken following information allegedly revealed by arrested LTTE suspects that they were to hire or hijack a private domestic plane and use it to blast Colombo's Parliamentary complex.

Air Force Commodore Jayalath Weerakkody told reporters that a ban on domestic flights was not linked with the AN-32 plane crash, but allegedly stemmed from a plan by Tamil Tigers to bomb parliament.

Military sources claimed that on the basis of information provided by LTTE suspects in custody, the Tigers planned to board an aircraft at the Ratmalana domestic airport and crash it on a suicide mission into the parliament while it was in session. 'I would not rule that out,' Weerakkody said. 'If you fly two-seater Cessna aircraft, you can squeeze in a hundred pouds of baggage. That's lethal if it is explosive.'

The suspension of domestic flights however does not affect international flights in any way and these operations would continue as normal.

There are ten domestic carriers in the country who are concerned about the ban on domestic flights as they have been looking forward to good business from next month when the tourist season begins.

The Hijacking of 'Iris Moana'

It is now established that the hijacking of the ferry 'Iris Moana' by the Tigers on 28 August was an elaborate well planned ruse to draw the Sri Lankan navy in a sea battle to destroy the navy's gunboats and to inflict as much damage as possible on the Sri Lankan navy.

The LTTE hijacked the vessel in mid sea off Mullaitivu in north-eastern Sri Lanka. The ferry with an eight-man crew was carrying 136 civilians, who were travelling from Trincomalee to Karaitivu. The vessel chartered by the Rehabilitation Ministry has been in regular use to operate ferry service between Trincomalee and Karaitivu to carry people travelling between the southern mainland and the government held islands situated off Jaffna peninsula. Cadres of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP), an anti-LTTE group led by Douglas Devananda, have been in charge of administering this ferry service.

Shortly after 6 pm on 28 August, 'Iris Moana' set sail unescorted heading north with all its passengers – 83 men, 58 women and 15 children under 7 years of age. Apart from its Captain, Loyala-Fernando, there were seven other crewmen – four Tamils and four Sinhalese – most of them former navy personnel. The vessel was to reach the Karaitivu island at 5 am on the following day.

One of the passengers, Nadarajah, subsequently told Jaffna newspapers as to how the LTTE hijacked the vessel in mid-sea off the coast of Mullaitivu. At about 2.30 am when he was fast asleep, he woke up to the sound of an explosion or gunfire and saw some armed women on board the vessel. They said, 'Don't be afraid, we are from the women's wing of the Sea Tigers.' Thereafter they asked all the passengers to get on to their boats. At about 5 pm all the passengers had reached the shore. None of the passengers were held as hostages on the ferry as claimed by the military.

Meanwhile, the army's directorate of military intelligence had sent out a warning to the navy that there were signs that an LTTE ship would begin unloading weapons for the Tigers somewhere near Mullaitivu on Tuesday, 29 August. Following this information (which later turned out to be another ruse, the navy's largest warship, 'SLNS Jayasagara' (P-601) and two Israeli-built fast attack gunboats, Super Dvora (P-463) and Dvora (p-458) were despatched to the area.

At 1.15 pm on the same day the 'Iris Moana' was spotted anchored about one-and-a-half miles from the Mullaitivu beach. The Super Dvora headed towards the ferry and navy men had not seen Sea Tiger boats around the ferry until the last moment. The Sea Tigers who were waiting in ambush fired, presumably rocket-propelled grenades, at Super Dvora almost at close range and the gunboat was immediately enveloped in a ball of flame. Defense analysts in Colombo have speculated the Tigers would have used a suicide squad on a boat packed with explosives to attack the Super Dvora.

As SLNS Jayasagara and the other Dvora (P-458) drew closer, they saw Tiger boats and the 'Iris Moana', but did not want to engage the Tigers at close quarters without further assistance from air and sea. The navy subsequently claimed that their vessels did not use their big guns to fire in the direction of the Sea Tiger boats because they thought that the passengers on board the 'Iris Moana' would be hit.

With the arrival of reinforcements in the form of air cover and additional gunboats, four Dvoras moved in to attack the Sea Tiger boats at about 5.30pm. But within minutes of the battle commencing, sailors in the other boats were shocked to see a huge explosion on Dvora (P-458). The naval vessels fired at the Tiger boats from a safe distance without much success although they claimed that they had sunk some of the Tiger boats. As darkness fell, all the navy vessels withdrew to a safe distance, unsure of what had hit the Dvoras and still unclear where the passengers of the 'Iris Moana' were.

However, the passenger Nadarajah said, 'We saw one of the Dvora boats in a ball of flame. A few hours later, the Tigers used a Water Jet boat (previously captured by the Tigers from the Sri Lankan navy) to drag the Dvora even as it was burning and brought it near the shore and put out

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Continued from page 5

the fire.' the LTTE later announced in Jaffna that from the two Dvoras, they had taken away four 20mm cannons, a large quantity of shells for the cannons, four 50 calibre guns, one AK LMG, One 303 LMG, ten AK machine guns, modern communication equipment and many other items of military value.

The attack was carried out by the women wing of the Sea Tigers. Their Special Commander Kalyani later told Jaffna newspapers that it was with the aim of drawing the Sri Lankan navy into a battle with the Tigers that the 'Iris Moana' was hijacked. 'As anticipated, the navy came to attack us. On both occasions, we succeeded in destroying the Dvoras', she added.

Of the passengers of the ferry taken to Jaffna by the Tigers, after a few days it was announced that 121 of them had been freed, and the ICRC would transport any of them who wanted to go to their homes in the government-held islands. Some reports indicate that 15 of the passengers, suspected of being members of the EPDP, have not been released and their fate remained in the hands of the Tigers.

Although the passengers of the ferry were released in Jaffna, the Tigers have refused to release the eight-man crew, some of whom have been described as men belonging to the Sri Lankan navy and others to the Eelam Peoples Democratic Front. They want the government to talk to the Tigers directly in regard to the release of the crew. According to the Voice of Tigers Radio, Kalyani, the Commander of the women's wing of the Sea Tigers was quoted as having told newspapers in Jaffna that the Tigers would consider freeing the crew provided the government in exchange freed the two women Sea Tigers who were captured by the Sri Lankan navy in the course of an attack, led by Kalyani, on a navy command and supply vessel, SLN Edithara which was sunk in the northern navy-controlled port of Kankesanturai on 16 July.

The demand for negotiations by the Tigers over the crew of the 'Iris Moana' is seen by analysts in Colombo as a ploy to get the government to begin talks with the LTTE at a time when the army was bracing for a major offensive on Jaffna. 'It is difficult to believe that the government, which is at war with the LTTE, will be ready to negotiate with it on the issue of the "Iris Moana" crew,' they said.

'Iris Moana' is still anchored in the Mullaitivu waters. Deputy Defence Minister Col. Anuruddha Ratwatte has said the 'Iris Moana' presently lying anchored 4 kilometres north of Mullaitivu would not be allowed to move, as it was feared that it was heavily laden with explosives aimed at causing considerable damage to whichever port it is brought to. He said the Government would receive the ship only if the ICRC gave a certificate that 'the ferry was not booby-trapped and was clear of any explosives'. The Navy does not want to approach or board it suspecting that it would have been laid with mines or explosives.

An announcement from the LTTE claimed that it had destroyed another Dvora gunboat on 3 September off the coast of Pulmoddai in the east. However, a military spokesman said this deliberate fabrication by the LTTE appears to be in order to cover-up its loss of two senior black Sea Tigers Nagulan and Kannalan who were killed off the coast of Pulmoddai on 3 September when three LTTE boats were attacked and destroyed by the Sri Lankan Navy killing a minimum of ten LTTE cadres as well.

★ Assassination Plot

Sri Lankan Police claimed on 11 September that they had uncovered a dual plot by the LTTE to assassinate President Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka, and the Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. In this connection the police have taken into custody three suspects who had been sent to Colombo by the LTTE from Jaffna and are searching for other members of the same hit squad suspected to be in and around Colombo.

The Deputy Inspector General G.B. Kotakadeniya told reporters in Colombo that one of the arrested men had confessed to the police that he was part of the plot to assassinate the two leaders in suicide attacks. 'The suspect was not here to carry out the assassination himself. He was only doing the ground work and feeding information to the LTTE's intelligence chief, Pottu Amman.'

On the basis of the information gathered from the arrested men, the squad had been detailed by Pottu Amman who had given them specific instructions to carefully study President Kumaratunga's movements, the surroundings of the Presidential Secretariat and the 'Temple Trees,' the President's official residence. The aim is to assassinate the President before the end of this year, the DIG told the press.

'These three people were sent on a special assignment' to prepare the groundwork for the killing of the president, Kotakadeniya said. 'They came on the same mission but belong to different cells. The problem is that one member of one cell doesn't know about the other.'

One of the men in custody after being arrested near Temple Trees, identified as Sinnadurai Muhundan, alias Rasan, had said that the LTTE had dispatched Singapore-trained agents to India to identify ways and means to assassinate the Indian Prime Minister. Mr. Kotakadeniya did not reveal any information as to who had trained the alleged agents in Singapore, nor did he give any details as to how the Indian PM was going to be targeted. Muhundan's arrest had led to the discovery of some documents containing a diagram of Temple Trees, and details about the change of duties of security service personnel and movements of the President, the DIG claimed.

Muhundan had been studying several options for the assassination attempt. They ranged from jumping at her limousine when she was on the move or when she was addressing a public meeting. The LTTE had trained seven suicide bombers to blow up seven vehicles in President Kumaratunga's motorcade simultaneously because she used one of several vehicles. And the training included the use of a disposable lightweight anti-tank weapon from a highrise building, the DIG said.

Mr. Kotakadeniya also said that Muhundan was detailed to collaborate with a female LTTE would-be suicide bomber named Rajini. The police were investigating Muhundan's statement that another LTTE operative had been despatched to Madras and ordered to await 'instructions'. 'We are awaiting more details from him about the LTTE's plans in Madras.' Muhundan was a senior cadre of the LTTE and joined it in 1989 and had claimed that he had personally met Pirbhakaran and received a gold medal from him after completing a training course in Singapore.

After waiting for nearly four years, some months ago New Delhi made a formal request to Colombo for the extradition of the LTTE leader, V. Pirabhakaran and two of his associates for their alleged involvement in the assassination of former Indian PM, Rajiv Gandhi. Reporters in Colombo speculated that Mr. Narasimha Rao would have become a target for the LTTE following New Delhi's extradition request.

However, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike recently told a press conference that she had no hopes of arresting and

extraditing the LTTE leader. 'If a hundred thousand Indian troops could not arrest him, how can we?' she said referring to the failure to arrest him by Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) when they were in the Northeast of the island from July 1987 to March 1990.

★ Only Limited Military Assistance From USA

While the United States of America would continue to provide limited military assistance to Sri Lanka, it will not sell lethal weapons partly because it remained concerned about the country's human rights record despite recent improvements, Assistant Secretary of State, Robin Raphel told reporters in Colombo on 1 September during his recent visit to the island.

'We have a limited military programme with the government of Sri Lanka,' Raphel said. 'We have some training exercise with them and we sell a limited amount of non-lethal equipment.' That cooperation could be upgraded, she said on the second day of a four-day tour. 'There are a number of reasons for not selling lethal weapons,' Raphel said. 'Human rights concerns is one of them.'

The Sri Lankan government recently presented a bill before parliament setting up a human rights commission following widespread criticism of deaths and torture of political opponents by previous governments.

Raphel said President Kumaratunga's government had taken impressive measures to check the abuse. 'For a couple of years it has really improved,' Raphel said. 'Overall, one can say, they have clearly improved, and this government has committed itself to very high standards of observance of human rights'.

Raphel particularly mentioned the government's probe into the suspected torture and killing by officials of the Special Task Force of the Police of 21 young men, mostly Tamil. 'The government has certainly done a good job of trying to find out who did that but overall we maintain a keen eye on (the country's human rights) and it is an issue for us.'

In response to questions from reporters, Robin Raphel also declined to confirm that Washington would officially describe the LTTE as 'terrorists' adding, 'There are legal ramifications and so on. It is a complicated legal issue.'

Raphel also said Washington backed peace talks between the government and the LTTE adding that the Colombo government appeared keen to resume peace talks with the Tigers. 'My impression is that the government would like to resume the dialogue with the LTTE and would like to resume negotiations,' she said after meeting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. However the spokesman for the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry quickly dismissed any such idea saying, 'She could not have got such an impression from her meeting with the Foreign Minister. He made very clear the difficulty in talking with the LTTE at present while the LTTE has blatantly shown it is opposed to ending this problem through the negotiating process.'

★ No Chance of Success Without LTTE

Residents of LTTE-controlled Jaffna peninsula in northern Sri Lanka told a visiting U.N. official the government's devolution package had no chance of success without approval of the leadership of the Tamil Tigers, acording to a broadcast from the LTTE radio station on 28 August.

'Historically we have seen many proposals for devolution which cannot be enforced without the consultation of the people fighting for the rights of the people,' the radio station quoted the residents as saying.

'The LTTE are the only force fighting for Tamils rights. We learnt a bitter lesson from the Rajiv Gandhi pact. We are going to see the sadness of the Chandrika pact also,' the radio said quoting a statement released by the Citizen's Committee of Jaffna, a consortium of non-governmental organisations, the Tamil Teachers' Union and Christian and Hindu groups.

Roland Hodson, humanitarian adviser and coordinator with the United Nations' Development Programme's Colombo mission, was visiting Jaffna to see for himself what work non-governmental organisations were doing and how the people were coping without the usual supply of government food ships.

Jaffna sources said that non-governmental organisations representing Jaffna's Tamil civilians had appealed to a visiting U.N. official to help revive stalled peace talks between Colombo and the Tigers

★ Targeting the Tower

A Tamil youth alleged to be with a blueprint of Colombo's new twin-tower World Trade Centre, the construction of which was financed by a Singapore-backed group, was arrested on suspicion that he was planning to blast the building with explosives, a senior police officer claimed on 31 August. He also said that another youth whom he described as an accomplice in the operation has also been taken into custody.

'We think he was planning to bomb the building or at least use the blueprint to feed information,' Deputy Inspector General G.B. Kotakadeniya told pressmen in Colombo. 'He had the blueprint showing where the pillars are.'

He said he thought that the plan was to do to the prestigious 39-storey building what Muslim extremists did, as is claimed in the US, to the twin-tower World Trade Centre in New York in 1993. In February 1993, a van was driven into the Manhattan building where a bomb exploded killing six people and injuring around 1,000. It caused millions of dollars in damage.

The police chief said that the arrested man, allegedly an LTTE operative, had said that he found the blueprint in a dustbin but there was no reason why any person should take an interest in and carry about building plans found in a dustbin other than for some ulterior purpose. Police claimed that they had recovered 30 blueprints of the World Trade Centre building from a Colombo shop where the suspect claimed to have worked. 'We think he was planning to bomb the building or at least use a blueprint to feed information with a view to bombing it,' Kotakadeniya said.

The twin towers, Sri Lanka's tallest building, houses offices and a shopping complex in the stylish tourist and business district of Colombo. The building complex is being built by S.P Tao's Shing Kwan Investments of Singapore through its Sri Lanka-listed Overseas Realty (Ceylon) with an investment of some US$110 million, Sri Lanka's largest single investment. The building has been hailed as a symbol of Colombo's rapid economic growth and has attracted top clients, including the stock exchange and brokers, some of which have been able to move in. From the outside it looks finished except for a few gaping holes.

Kotakadeniya said the police arrested another Tamil person, an employee of the state-owned Bank of Ceylon on 3 September for smuggling petrol to his 15th floor office at the bank's headquarters, Colombo's second tallest building. He has been employed as a clerk by the bank and was transferred to the Bank's head office from the northern district of Vavuniya six months ago. He is thought to have smuggled small amounts of petrol into the building concealed in food packets. Police be-

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lieve the two Tamils were part of a Tiger plan to blow up commercial buildings in Colombo as part of their strategy to cause damage, destruction and deter tourists and foreign investors.

Relatives of the second suspect in Colombo denied that he was in any way connected with any plan to blast any building. they said that the suspect used a motor cycle to travel to his work place and that the petrol can, which was found in his office, was one which he carried with him to be used in the event that his vehicle ran out of petrol.

★ Opposition Calls for Draft Law on Devolution

Sri Lanka's Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe urged the government to release its devolution proposals as a draft bill. Unless this was done, it would not be possible for any responsible political party to make its position on the proposals known, he said at a party meeting recently.

Mr. Wickremasinghe said that the devolution package announced by the government early this month contains proposals for turning Sri Lanka from a unitary state into a state of regions and power sharing by the central government with the regional governments.

Devolution was not new to his United National Party, which is for devolution. However, his party would oppose any proposals that might affect the unitary status of the country, he added. He urged the government to prepare and release a draft bill based on opinions so far expressed by the people and political organizations, saying it was only then that any definite views could be expressed, he added.

★ ICRC Resumes Escort of Foodships to Jaffna

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on 28 August it had reached an agreement with the Sri Lankan government to resume food supplies to the Jaffna Peninsula in the north.

Government sources said the ICRC would again escort government chartered ships to the Tiger-controlled port of Point Pedro while continuing to avoid services to the Navy port of Kankesanturai.

'After satisfactory discussions between the ICRC and the government the ICRC have decided to immediately resume its activity of escorting the ships chartered by the Government Agent in Jaffna,' the ICRC and the government said in a statement.

The first food ship, M.V. Kalyani, loaded with 2,200 tons of food set sail on 29 August. It was to unload at Point Pedro on 2 September. A second ship, M.V. Lanka Muditha had already begun loading on 30 August to set sail in due course.

Government sources said a key condition to end the month-old suspension of ICRC's escort operation to Jaffna, allows search of the ICRC-protected ships before they are off-loaded at Point Pedro. It was not immediately clear whether the Tigers had endorsed the proposed search of the ships, which government sources said would take place 10 km (15 miles) off Point Pedro.

The ICRC stopped sailing to the northern region in late July after its own ship was sunk by a mine off Kankesanturai. It later resumed services to Point Pedro, a Tiger controlled port, saying it had security guarantees from the Tigers to go there.

Some 300,000 people were threatened with starvation as a result of the month-old standoff between the ICRC and the government. The ICRC, which had been escorting six ships transporting a monthly average of 10,000 tonnes of supplies provided by the government for Jaffna civilians, said it would resume escort of food shipments to Kankesanturai for civilians residing in government-controlled areas in and around the peninsula if the Tigers gave security guarantees.

The deal followed weeks of criticism of the ICRC by the government and the Sri Lankan media, which accused it of leaning towards the Tigers. The alleged bias was attributed to its refusal to escort ships to Kankesanturai and in its report of an aerial bombing of a Jaffna church.

Government officials said that the standoff between the government and the ICRC was brought to an end and the deal with the ICRC was made possible thus averting the threatened starvation of the civilian population of Jaffna by the personal intervention of President Kumaratunga. 'Her Excellency personally intervened to arrange to rush food supplies to Jaffna,' the Government Agent of Jaffna Mr. K. Ponnampalam told the press.

★ Financing the Tigers?

The Sri Lankan police in Colombo claimed on 21 August that, following a two month long investigation, a squad from the Crime Detection Bureau raided a Pettah shop and seized 40,000 US dollars in cash and incriminating documents which provided an insight into what they described as 'LTTE funding both local and foreign'.

Deputy Inspector General (Colombo) G.B. Kotakadeniya said one person had been taken into custody but declined to provide details of the raid except to say that 'it revealed the vast dimensions of the LTTE's financial network'. Following this incident several Tamil Colombo businessmen who have alleged to have made regular pay-offs to the LTTE, are being questioned by the Police, he said.

However, Tamil sources in Colombo discounted the police claim as trumped up or exaggerated. They said that the so-called Tiger financial network was nothing more than what everyone knew as the normal practice of expatriate Sri Lankans of all communities – Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims – engaging the services of middlemen with no political affiliations to remit money to their relatives in the island. There are middlemen in foreign capitals who have their contact middlemen in Colombo who enable these transactions which are undertaken primarily for financial profit. They suggested that the arrested man might be such a contact.

However, DIG Kotakadeniya said the large majority, if not all, of Tamil businessmen in Sri Lanka and overseas had handed over money to the LTTE, either voluntarily or by force. 'It's mandatory,' he said. 'It's not only in Sri Lanka, it happens in Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, England, everywhere. In Dubai, Tamils have to buy tickets to prove their contributions.' Replying to a question, he said, 'Whether it is voluntary or it is extortion is very difficult to answer as it is mandatory.'

He said Tamil businessmen in Sri Lanka were issued receipts for their donations which had to be sent to relatives in the Jaffna peninsula to be shown to the Tigers. Kotakadeniya said he had seen four such letters.

Eight people were in custody in connection with the swoop on a Colombo office on 21 August including the Manager who handled the funds. The Manager had been moving 10 million rupees (US$200,000) a month since January this year, Kotakadeniya said, adding that 'much, much more' had been sent to the north.

Australia Funds Surgical Team

Australia would provide $170,000 to fund a surgical team in the war-affected north of Sri Lanka, Federal

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Catholic Bishops Welcome Devolution and Urge Dialogue

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka has issued a statement on the present situation in the country and the efforts that are being made to establish peace.

The statement issued by its Secretary-General Bishop Malcolm Ranjith said:

Responding to the situation presently affecting our country we, the Catholic Bishops of Sri Lanka wish to share with our fellow citizens those thoughts and reflections on the present political crisis and the efforts that are being made to bring about a solution to that crisis. In this matter we are inspired by the invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ in His Sermon on the Mount, where outlining the Beatitudes, He told His disciples that those who work for Peace are blessed and 'shall be called Sons of God'. (Mt. 5:9].

The ongoing war in the North and East causing death, injury and destruction to people and property is a sad experience indeed and can be called a dark page in our history. The country is losing precious lives and its economic progress is seriously retarded. More than anything else it is creating a divisive spirit among the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities and creating a deep spirit of mutual suspicion and separation between them. The gap seems to constantly widen. Intensifying the war effort in this context, in our opinion, is counter productive as we feel it would separate and alienate the communities even further. The suffering heaped upon the civilians by the prolonging of an armed approach to the conflict is indescribable. Our hearts go out in sympathy to those who lost their loved ones and those who are orphaned, disabled, homeless and in refugee camps on both sides of the divide.

We firmly believe and wish to reiterate that war can never bring about a permanent solution to any conflict anywhere. It is also futile to propose that war can pave the way for peace. It is common knowledge that every war has to finally end in dialogue, compromise and an agreement which envisages a spirit of give and take. It is our firm belief then, that all concerned should seek a negotiated solution to this problem afflicting us, however difficult, arduous or risky the path to such a settlement is.

We are glad to note in this light the courageous efforts made by the government to come up with a devolution package as a solution to this problem. We have always held that the solution to this problem is through a strong and effective devolution of power to the periphery without harming the sovereignty of the country. Devolution, in our belief, does not necessarily weaken the strength of the country as a united whole and could instead be a cause for a permanent healing of the wounds of conflict that have plagued our country since independence and a way for its rapid economic and social development. We do not feel that such a devolution would mean creating a path to separatism. Sri Lanka is and should remain one country with an essentially pluralistic social structure where individuals, families and communities should have and enjoy the freedom and facilities for growth in a cultural milieu of their own. Building the country is to encourage unity in diversity.

Yet, for such a devolution to be effective it should be studied well and exhaustively discussed. All parties and people in this country, without excluding any one, should have the opportunity to study, discuss and express their opinions and suggestions. Above all, in order to allow all communities and individuals to feel that they are very much part of the solutions, a climate of trust and mutual respect should be built up based on the principle that all citizens of the country are equal. If such a climate cannot be created and communities or parties are in any way excluded all attempts for a truly democratic and dignified settlement may fail as it happened many a time in the past.

Such a dialogue and spirit of compromise of one's positions always signifies risks, and risks help to build up mutual trust. We urge all communities in Sri Lanka to show each other such a spirit of trustfulness in seeking a solution. One cannot be always looking for guarantees if trust is to be the basis of a solution and every one must strive to create trust by also being trustworthy and truthful. 'We believe then, that the proposals put forward by the government with due safeguards to ensure the sovereignty of the state, thus paving the way for a consensus offer to all concerned possibly a last chance to solve this long running issue peacefully. The process of dialogue to arrive at such a consensus should not exclude anyone including those who advocate the militant approach.

It is our earnest hope as we already stated so way back in 1984 that all of us, citizens of Sri Lanka, should strive to organise a movement that seeks to ensure to every individual and community in our country 'a sense of belongingness, of being accepted, respected, wanted and cared for'. (Towards the building up of the Sri Lankan nation p.34). For it is in such a set-up that Peace will not only be restored and re-established but also deeply and firmly rooted in the heritage of our nation for all time.

We appeal to all the citizens of this land to not only pray and invoke blessings of Peace but also to be instruments of Peace in their own surroundings. We call upon them to dedicate themselves fully to this noble ideal and be ready to make any sacrifice as may be necessary, most of all the readiness to break down prejudices and attitudes of mistrust and suspicion towards those of the other communities. Let us always be guided by the principles of truth and justice.

May the Lord Jesus Christ, through the intercession of His Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, bestow on Sri Lanka the blessings of Justice, Peace and Prosperity. We pray that Peace will dawn soon on our country so that 'Swords will be turned into ploughshares. Spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation. And there will be no more training for war.' (Is. 2:4).

Rt. Rev. Dr. Nicholas Marcus Fernando (Archbishop); Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Marcus Fernando; Rt. Rev. Dr. T. Savundranayagam; Rt. Rev. Dr. Henry Goonewardena OMI; Rt. Rev. Dr. Edmund Fernando OMI; Rt. Rev. Dr. Raymond Peiris; Rt. Rev. Dr. Elmo Perera; Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando (President); Rt. Rev Dr. Kingsley Swampillai (Vice-President); Rt. Rev. Dr. Malcolm Ranjith (Secretary-General); Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph; Rt. Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis.

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Pacific Island Affairs Minister Gordon Bilney said on 2 September. Mr. Bilney said the team, comprising a surgeon in obstetrics and gynaecology, an anaesthetist, a nurse and a logistics officer, would be based at the Vavuniya Hospital in the north.

The hospital was just behind the forward defence lines of the Sri Lankan army, he said. Access was difficult because of the conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. 'The 422,000 people living in these conflict affected areas have no access to surgical facilities,' he said. 'Instead they must make an arduous and risky journey to Anuradhapura, in the centre of the country.'

Mr. Bilney said the Australian-funded surgical team would provide surgical services on the spot,

The Case of the Tortured Floating Bodies — Culprits to Face Prosecution

The Sri Lankan government has promised to vigorously investigate the case of the extra judicial brutal killings allegedly carried out by elements within the Police Special Task Force and Military Intelligence since late April this year, and prosecute those against whom evidence is available.

As a preliminary step, the government has abolished the 'independent status' hitherto enjoyed by the Special Task Force, and brought it directly under the Inspector General of Police.

Twentyeight officers mainly belonging to the specially trained Special Task Force (STF) and Military Intelligence had been taken into custody and detained for investigation in connection with the discovery of mutilated and decomposed bodies in the waterways near the island's capital over a period of three months, according to an announcement made on 31 August by Sri Lanka's Inspector General of Police, Mr. Wickremasinghe Rajaguru.

Most of the victims were abducted from hostels, guesthouses, lodges or while travelling in Colombo, apparently because they were suspected of being connected with the Tigers, said Rajaguru. They were taken to the Special Task Force headquarters in the capital, held for five or six days and tortured before being strangled to death, he said.

Ten police commandos, a soldier and seven civilians have been arrested and detained and 10 more soldiers, suspected of being involved in the abductions, and subsequent killings were being held in military custody, Rajaguru said.

Police have not uncovered the motive for the killings. Government politicians have claimed that elements within the forces did this to bring discredit upon the government. But the first bodies began to appear in the Bolgoda lake near Colombo against the background of the resumption of armed hostilities by the Tigers against government forces in mid-April this year when they withdrew from the peace process initiated by President Kumaratunga.

The head of the police Criminal Investigation Department, T.D. Sumanasekera, told reporters that at least 21 corpses found in lakes and rivers around the capital from May to August were people who had died in the headquarters of Sri Lanka's paramilitary Special Task Force (STF).

Sumanasekera confirmed that most of the victims were Tamils and said that 11 STF personnel and seven civilians were being held under emergency regulations for questioning in connection with the killings. Another seven military personnel, believed also to be linked with the killings, were being held by the military police.

The victims were strangled and their bodies were dumped in the waterways. Many of those killed appeared to have been starved and tortured before they died, Sumanasekera added. The victims had been taken to an unused toilet and strangled using special belt-like plastic handcuffs. When it's tightened around the neck of the victim, it gets locked, leading to suffocation. After the lock snaps shut and the victim is dead, the handcuff is then severed using a sharp instrument and thrown into the unused toilet. 'In my 39 years in the police service this is the first time I

Joining the Ranks of the 'Disappeared'

Their parents said they were too young, but Vijendra and Shamini did not listen. They married last November, within months of meeting, and Shamini is already pregnant.

They rented a small room in a crowded alley in Welwatte, the Tamil district of Colombo, and Vijendra got a job at a video rental shop. They were just scraping by, but they were happy. Until June 26, when Vijendra, aged 25, disappeared.

Shamini has had no word from her husband since then, but human rights workers believe he is among almost 30 Tamil men from the Colombo area who have disappeared since May.

It is generally believed in Colombo that the disappearances are the work of a rogue element in the security forces, frustrated by President Chandrika Kumaratunga's efforts to end 12 years of civil war.

The officers are said to favour a hard line to purge Colombo and government-controlled areas of suspected sympathisers for the Tamil Tiger guerrillas fighting for a separate state in the north of the island. 'Without the help of the police, I think it's difficut for anyone to take a man away because there are many checkpoints,' a Human Rights Task Force spokesman said.

Vijendra left for work as usual on June 26, but he came home in mid-morning because Shamini was unwell. He cooked curry and rice for lunch, and went back to work at 5pm.

She waited for him in the evening, but when there was no sign of him by dawn, she fled the house. Since then, she has been waiting for him.

'I still think he will return,' she says. Her mother, sitting in the guest house where they have taken refuge, shakes her head. She has been trying to get her daughter to face the truth.

The morning after Vijendra's disappearance, Shamini and a cousin visited the police, the CID, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the government's Human Rights Task Force. There was no news of him.

About 10 days later, Shamini got a call to come and see six bodies that had been fished out of Bolgoda lake, 30 miles south of Colombo. She could not bear the thought of it; relatives told her to think of the baby, who is due in December, and an uncle went to see whether Vijendra was among the dead.

The police saw things differently. They interrogated her for three days, and insisted Vijendra was working for the Tigers – although his family left the guerrilla stronghold of Jaffna when he was a child. They implied Shamini's marriage was in trouble, and that she was having an affair. 'I said that I was pregnant and I was sick, but they refused to accept that,' Shamini says.

But the prospect of an investigation is little comfort to Shamini. She hopes to emigrate to Canada where Vijendra's parents live. She says she will wait for him there.

(Extract from *The Guardian*, 29.8.95).

Escaping From the Jaws of Death

Lawyer P. Pathmanathan's son was abducted on Tuesday, 18 July opposite the Fort Railway station. He was a student in Colombo and had obtained 8 distinctions at the GCE (O-Level) examination and was preparing to sit the A-Level examination the day he was abducted.

'My son had collected some money to buy a pair of shoes, but as he had required some extra money, I asked him to meet me near the Odeon theatre. But I was held up in courts, got late, could not keep my appointment with my son, and went to my brother's house in Wellawatte and then went to Majestic City to buy the shoes for my son.

'Because the price of shoes was too much, my son decided to go and buy them at the World Market at Pettah and he went there. I received a telephone call at about 7.30 pm from my son, but before he could say anything, the line got cut off. This puzzled me and I asked several friends whether my son had gone to their places, but of no avail. He did not come back home that night. I lodged complaints with the police and got in touch with very senior police officers through others to inquire about my son's whereabouts. We heard nothing from him or about his whereabouts during the following day, Wednesday 19 July.

'It was on Thursday (20 July) morning that I received a telephone call from my son who said that he was at the Fort Railway Station. By the time I rushed there, he was not in sight. I went to the Maradana Police Station and made inquiries about my son, but they were of no avail. Finally I telephoned home, and found that he had returned home.'

According to Mr. Pathmanathan's son, it was near the World Market at Pettah that a van had stopped in front of him and two men showing him an address asked him for directions. The general location of the address which was in Kotahena was familiar to him because he and his family had previously lived there some years earlier. He was forced to get into the van which he did.

As he got into the van, he saw two women, but after some time he realised that the two were males dressed in women's attire. By the time the van reached Kotahena, he sensed something strange about the whole thing, managed to get off the van, ran to a telephone booth and telephoned his father at about 7.30 pm but before he could say anything, he was pulled out of the telephone booth and dragged away by those who had come in the van. Thereafter he was blindfolded and taken to a dark room where there were several others kept in detention.

They had shaved off his hair and kept him naked. He had been asked to lie on the floor and was not given any food or water. They had taken his chain watch and torn his National Identity Card to shreds.

It would appear that as a result of the complaints and contact that Mr. Pathmanathan made with senior and powerful police officers, the latter had been making inquiries even from the Special Task Force headquarters. During Pathmanathan's son's stay in custody, his abductors had asked him whether he was a person of such importance and influence that even top police officers were inquiring after him. Police insiders suspect that the abductors realised that Pathmanathan's son had become 'too hot to handle' that they decided to release him without subjecting him to the same fate as the other victims whose bodies were found in lakes and rivers. 'Pathmanathan's son has escaped from the jaws of an agonizing death', a human rights lawyer commented.

Mr. Pathmanathan's son had suffered enormously both mentally and physically due to the ordeal he was put through. He was in a state of shock unable to recount what actually happened to him from the time he was abducted. Only during subsequent weeks, that too after medical treatment, he has been able to recapitulate what happened to him and coming out with the tale of him being assaulted and subjected to torture. He continues to complain of severe body pain.

saw a contraption of this nature', DIG Sumanasekera told the press.

In addition to the 28 already in custody, 21 other officers have been questioned. Of those in custody, the police officer of the highest rank is an Inspector, a Captain belonging to the Directorate of Military Intelligence is also in custody.

In response to questions, Mr. Sumanasekera said that in the case of the victims of these abductions, no entries of their arrests had been made by the officers responsible.

In answer to a question, Minister of Information, Mr. Dharmasiri Senanayake said that even if a man is arrested as an LTTE suspect, no one including the police or the military has the right to torture or kill him.

The frequent appearance of tortured and disfigured dead bodies in the lakes and rivers around Colombo clearly embarrassed the Kumaratunga administration which assumed office pledged to end what President called 'an era of terror by the state.' Mass graves were exhumed and three commissions appointed to probe disappearances. Expressing deep concern, President Kumaratunga ordered a special and vigorous investigation under the direct supervision of Police Chief W. Rajaguru.

'The number of the dead and the circumstances surrounding the disposal of the bodies suggest that a well organised group with substantial resources is at the bottom of these macabre killings,' the state-owned Daily News said in an editorial.

Many vehicles, including five jeeps used to transport the victims and other items have been seized for forensic tests. Body parts of victims, blood stains and finger prints are being examined. Some of the items have been flown to the University of Glasgow.

International human rights bodies like Amnesty International, local human rights groups and activists, and political parties like the TULF had alerted the government to the disappearances of Tamil youths ever since the resumption of armed hostilities between the Tigers and government forces.

'In June we had 30 complaints and they have been coming in ever since,' said Sunila Abeysekara of Inform, a local human rights group.

Responding to concerns expressed by various human rights groups and Tamil political parties, President Kumaratunga issued a special set of directives to be adopted when persons were arrested and detained on suspicion. Every arresting officer was directed to give a receipt to the next of kin of the person arrested and inform them of where the person was being

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The Last Chance for Peace

by Dr. Jeeva S. Anandan,
Wolfson College, Oxford

The historic proposals by the President of Sri Lanka, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, for the devolution of power are welcome for three reasons.

First, and this seems to be the main if not the sole purpose for the proposals, they may bring a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict which has cost tens of thousands of lives and enormous stifling consequences to the economy of Sri Lanka. Second, it would make Sri Lanka more democratic by enabling its people to have greater control over how they are governed. Finally, the increased autonomy that would result if these proposals are implemented, ironically, would enable Sri Lanka to become more unified with the resultant decrease in conflicts.

To appreciate these reasons, it is necessary to see the present situation in Sri Lanka in its historical perspective. Those who do not know history, said George Santayana, are condemned to repeat it. It is necessary not only to know history but also to learn the right lesson from it in order to prevent repetition of its tragic consequences. For Sri Lanka, the history of at least all of South Asia is relevant.

Unification of India

Historically, South Asia consisted of many little and large nations whose boundaries have changed with ties. After the British conquest of South Asia, these nations were put together into larger nations for administrative convenience. This may be compared with the 'inflictions' of Europe under the Roman Empire, the Soviet Union under the Bolshevik Party, and Yugoslavia under Marshal Tito. Each of these 'inflictions' was due to some central authority – there was no genuine sharing of power – and it fell apart after this authority ceased to exist or exercise its control.

A remarkable phenomenon, however, happened in India, that like Sri Lanka originally consisted of several kingdoms which were administratively ruled as a single nation by the British. Indians fought for their independence from the British by means of a mass movement, under the leadership of Mohandas Gandhi.

This had a unifying effect on India for three reasons: First, the British provided a common enemy for all of India. Second, the non violent movement of Gandhi had to become a mass movement in order to succeed, and this led to the development of a new 'Indian' consciousness. Finally, the vast majority of Indians could identify themselves with Gandhi who dressed and lived like them, and represented many of their best values.

The unification of India may have been Gandhi's greatest achievement. Tamilnadu, for example, was stronghold of Gandhi, even though he spoke Gujarathi, a North India language akin to Hindi.

Sinhalese and Tamils

The concept of 'Indianness' came into being during the independence struggle. In contrast, Sri Lankans did not fight for their independence and the concept of 'Sri Lankans' did not develop. They continued to think of themselves as Sinhalese or Tamils after Sri Lanka became independent in 1948.

This explains why all the non Marxist parties in Sri Lanka represented primarily the interests of the Sinhalese or Tamils. The seemingly irrational statements made today by some intelligent people on both sides of the ethnic conflict may be understood on the basis of this lack of Sri Lankan consciousness. It is in this context that the President's devolution proposals should be assessed. It should not be assessed on the basis of a unitary state that exists only in our constitution, not in the hearts of people, nor in an administrative sense because of the *de facto* separate state which exists in the North today.

Sri Lanka, however, had one major advantage over India. This was the absence, historically, of any major conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils when Sri Lanka became independent. (Although there were conflicts between Sinhala and Tamil kings, which sometimes have been blown out of proportion, this did not affect the cordial relations between the ordinary Sinhalese and Tamils). This is unlike in India where there were centuries of conflicts between the Hindus and the Muslims, which was a major stumbling block in Gandhi's attempts to prevent the partition between India and Pakistan.

Official Language

In fact, when Sri Lanka became independent, Jaffna schools voluntarily taught Sinhala as a second language to Tamil students. They stopped this abruptly when Sinhala was made the only official language in 1956, against the opposition of Tamils. This was unlike what happened in India where Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (who was brought into politics in the 1920s primarily by Gandhi) decided to postpone making Hindi the official language for all of India because of opposition by some minority groups. Satisfied by Nehru's concession, the DMK which at that time was demanding the separation of South India from the Indian Union gave up this demand, and since then has respected the integrity of India.

Had Nehru been short sighted andd thought only in terms of what he and his party would benefit in the next elections, he may not have made this concession. Then the unity of India, achieved by the sacrifice of millions of Gandhians, may have been lost. Nehru understood that in a democratic country the rights of the majority did not need special protection because the electoral process assured that the government will be dominated by the majority. For the same reason, the rights of the minority needed to be protected. This explains also the concessions which were rightly made to the Muslim minority in India by the Nehru Government.

In Sri Lanka, the Marxist leaders were able to act with such foresight with regard to the ethnic problem. But they were never in power, and did not build up a mass movement in Sri Lanka as Gandhi did in India. However, if the proposal of 'parity' for Sinhala and Tamil made by the LSSP and the CP were implemented, the ethnic conflict would not have accrued and by now everyone in Sri Lanka would be learning Sinhala for the simple reason that the Sinhalese form the majority in Sri Lanka.

Decentralisation

A poet once said that the saddest words in pen or tongue are these four words: 'It Might Have Been!' My only reason for recalling the past blunders of Sri Lankan political leaders without which the ethnic conflict would not have taken place is to draw the right lessons from them. Also, our present President should be commended for going beyond any Indian leader or any other South Asian leader in the offers she is making to the minorities now. It is difficult to imagine how she could go further than this without seriously offending the majority. This is the most promising moment for ending the ethnic conflict since it began and if it is not seized now we could have centuries of violent wars and conflict.

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I now turn to the second reason given above in support of the President's proposals. The representative democracy within a unitary framework which we inherited from Britain has the disadvantage that it is very centralised. Once the Government has been elected it tends to lose touch with the people. This produces a sense of alienation among people, who don't feel that they are genuinely part of the system that is governing them.

In general, people feel helpless in dealing with large structures, whereas they have much more control over smaller structures. The decentralisation that would result from the implementation of the proposed devolution would break large structures into more manageable smaller structures. The decentralisation that would result from the implementation of the proposed devolution would break large structures into more manageable smaller structures.

We can learn about the importance of decentralisation again from history. The rulers of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe tried to implement 'socialism' by means of a centralised command economy. This was bound to collapse, despite the high ideal underlying socialism, because it was too centralised. There are too many parameters which need to be regulated to develop and maintain a healthy economy. And it is not possible for a few individuals in a central government body to regulate all of them.

Another example is the criminalisation of politics which has unfortunately taken place in India and Pakistan. Although the people of these countries would of course like to see honest politicians elected, they feel helpless in ensuring this in large electorates with candidates determined centrally by large political parties.

Gandhi's Vision

On the other hand, the panchayats or village councils, based on the Gandhian model of village republics, are working very well in India. Clearly, in each small village people are more likely to know who the bad elements are and exclude them from power than in a large electorate. A commentator disparagingly said that if our provincial council set-up were adopted in India, there would be 450 states. But this number falls short of the thousands of self-sufficient village republics which Gandhi wanted India to consist of!

But because Gandhi's plan of developing the villages was not adopted, and instead the Nehru Government developed the cities, there were people coming from the villages to the cities looking for jobs and creating slums. Also, those in power and the bureaucracy used by the central government to govern India have become increasingly corrupt. The only way of overcoming the corruption and criminalisation of the government in India today seems to be to decentralise power to such an extent that the government becomes irrelevant to the daily lives of the people. The only purpose of the central government should be to prevent conflicts between the different autonomous regions and to ensure that individual human rights are not violated by the local governing bodies in these regions.

Unity of Sri Lanka

Another virtue of decentralisation, which was the final reason given above for favouring the present devolution proposals, is that it promotes unity. In democratic countries like India, Canada, Switzerland and Belgium, where there are Federal systems of government, even the demands for separation made by some sections of the population can be coped with because of the power sharing which already exists. A Federal system for Sri Lanka was first proposed, as far as we know, by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1926.

It is of utmost importance for all people of Sri Lanka that the integrity of Sri Lanka should be maintained. Here again we can learn from history. The British divided Ireland on religious grounds for which the people of Northern Ireland and Britain paid a very heavy price, and they are still paying. But refusing to learn from history, the British repeated this mistake when they divided British India into Pakistan and India on religious grounds. (The secular leaders of India, wisely rejected the term Hindustan which the British intended for the present day India.) This partition alone resulted in an estimated one and a half million deaths. And there were three wars between the two countries since then.

The only separatist movement which India faces today is in Kashmir, which is related to this partition between India and Pakistan. Also, the break-up of Yugoslavia into different nations has resulted in a brutal war which eclipses even the violence in Sri Lanka.

It is therefore reasonable to expect that there would be much greater and prolonged violence than what we have seen so far in Sri Lanka if this country were to be divided, because of disputed territories, lingering animosities, competition for resources etc. Given the lack of integration between the two major communities in Sri Lanka, mentioned above, it appears that the only way to prevent major conflicts between them and to build a genuinely united Sri Lanka would be to implement the proposed devolution.

We are today going through a computer electronic revolution which is making the world increasingly interconnected and a consequent sharing of values of the diverse cultures of humanity. I believe, therefore that if we end the present conflicts based on religion, race and language, then gradually the divisions between nations will disappear and we would eventually have a unification of all humanity.

Sri Lanka is in a very good position to take advantage of this technological revolution because of its high literacy, healthcare system and natural resources. If we bring to an end the ethnic conflict, Sri Lanka could be the next economic miracle like Japan or Singapore. The prosperity this would bring us would make any further conflict unnecessary. And it would contribute to the unity of this beautiful Island. The devolution would give people more control over their lives and thereby help prevent the erosion of the valuable aspects of our culture during this inevitable technological revolution.

Comparison with Europe

South Asia after the disintegration of the British Empire is in a position analogous to what Europe was after the disintegration of the Roman Empire. Like Europe, we could fight among ourselves for another seventeen centuries before trying to unify ourselves. In this century alone there were two World Wars which originated in Europe. With the funnelling of arms to Afghanistan by the United States because of the Cold War hysteria, South Asians today have weapons which are much more powerful, deadly and destructive than what Europeans used in their centuries of strife.

Alternatively, we could benefit from a philosophy which originated in South Asia, which could give us peace and unity right away.

This philosophy is at least as comprehensive as Marxism, which originated in Europe, but which was unable to end the strife in the West. This is the philosophy of Buddha and Gandhi. As is well known, Mohandas Gandhi was profoundly influenced by Buddha's ahimsa or non violence, his mor-

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Nationalist Extremism and Political Moderation

by Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda, University of Colombo

In ethnic politics, no single extremism can exist without its own enemy, the ethnic other. One is the mirror image of its own negation.

The PA government's devolution proposals have evoked two forms of total-rejectionist responses – one emanating from extremist Tamil nationalists in Jaffna and Colombo and the other from extreme nationalists in Sinhala society.

Meanwhile, there is also opposition to the package, emanating from the unacceptability of certain specific clauses of it. The latter does not reject devolution *per se*, and thereby leaves adequate room for re-workng of those specific areas in the package.

The extreme Tamil nationalist rejection of Kumaratunga's proposals appears to be fundamentally conditional on the nature of LTTE's relationship with the Colombo government. If a scenario develops where Prabhakaran at least tactically decides in favour of resuming LTTE-government talks on the basis of the current framework of devolution proposals, they are likely to change their rejectionist attitude to the proposals. Then they will see some merit in the proposals.

The extreme Sinhala nationalist rejection of the devolution package has a different and fairly strong foundation. The latter's world view is fundamentally anchored on a unitarist/centralist perception of the Sri Lankan state. Their master image of the post-colonial Sri Lankan state is a highly centralized one in which Sinhala political hegemony is ensured by unmitigated concentration of legislative, executive and judicial power at the central government in Colombo. In a curiously ironical manner, the JR Constitution of 1978, minus the 13th Amendment, perfectly fulfils this political vision.

Ethnic extremism, which ever form it may assume, has a fairly simple and simplistic logic, as demonstrated by spokespersons of Sinhala and Tamil nationalist extremisms in the public debate on the devolution package. It stems from certain shared epistemological sources like fear, suspicion and mistrust among ethnic groups. Therefore, the solutions they conceive are extreme ones, that would not be acceptable to even the most moderate nationalists of the other ethnic group.

In that spirit, the extreme Tamil nationalists have been arguing for separation or, as an alternative, for a confederation that should guarantee the Tamil nationalist entitlement to secede. 'We cannot trust the Sinhalese who have always oppressed, colonized and deceived the Tamil people. Even when they talk peace, they have a hidden agenda to conquer the Tamil people by military means' – I have repeatedly heard this argument being made by LTTE leaders and their sympathizers.

While listening to them, I have always observed that they are simply unable to comprehend the possibility of a position which is even slightly moderate from their maximalist goal.

In their political vocabulary, 'compromise with the Sinhalese' is simply a dirty word. Their world view – the way they understand the world – is essentially governed by a logic of suspicion, mistrust and fear that emanate from a particular understanding of the past and the resultant attitude towards the future. When one begins to respond to their long catalogue of reasons for mistrusting the Sinhalese by saying 'Yes, but. . . .' the conversation cannot proceed. Thus, ethnic extremism, which is a form of essentialism in knowledge carrying the dead-weight of the past, presupposes the total invalidation of any approach of common grounds to the future.

One can easily apply the same analysis to extreme Sinhala nationalism, if one had time to watch lawyers, professors and learned monks of the Sinhala community passionately rejecting the devolution package. When they cite the past examples of Tamil treachery against the Sinhalese, Marx's prophetic words become eminently meaningful: 'the traditions of all the dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living.' In a very simplistic logic, they cite 'historical' facts to prove the inherently untrustworthy nature of the Tamils. 'Tamils are up to no good. They want to split this country and subjugate the Sinhala Buddhists. This little island is the only place we Sinhalese can live. Devolution means splitting this tiny little island of the Sinhalese.' One such spokesperson recently equated the ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka to tenants who have been trying by deceit to oust the house-owner from his own property!

Such simplistic logic of extreme Sinhala nationalism, just like its Tamil version, oversimplifies the complex question of ethnic politics in Sri Lanka to such an extent that it is capable of providing a seemingly coherent argument. Actually, that is why the poetry of extremism can convince at least some people. And the convinced become uncompromising hardliners. Any dissent from that simplistic wisdom is easily seen as treachery and conspiracy.

Recently, I was discussing the devolution package, at a polite luncheon meeting with some spokespersons for extreme Sinhala nationalist positions. Having listened to them, I could not resist the conclusion that if their understanding of Sri Lanka's past, present and future is shared by the majority of the Sinhala people, Sri Lanka's eventual political disintegration will, sooner or later, become an unavoidable reality. They saw no virtue in compromise and accommodation in ethnic relations in Sri Lanka. Ethnic mistrust and jealousy, as I observed, were paramount in their appraisal of devolution proposals of the PA government.

Meanwhile, conspiracy theories abound in extremist political positions. When I was in Jaffna in March and April, the LTTE was propagating the theory that the Chandrika government was 'conspiring with foreign powers' to destroy the LTTE. In the South, the extreme Sinhalese nationalists see in Chandrika's proposals for devolution a conspiracy to destroy the Sinhala race. The JVP too believed in many conspiracies. Theories and accusations of conspiracy are difficult to disprove, because they are entirely based on irrational convictions and deeply felt sentiments of insecurity. But, the poetry of extremism is irrational. And it is by means of the inherent irrationalism of sentiments that extremisms seek to thrive and command some appeal.

Extremist approaches to problems, as Sri Lanka's own tragic experience amply demonstrates, cannot solve problems; they can only make problem-solving infinitely difficult. They can make problems intractable. As Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne of Sarvodaya recently suggested in a television interview, extremism may make us a part of the problem, and not a part of the solution. When Prime Ministers Bandaranaike and Dudley Senanayake sought to solve Sri Lanka's ethnic problem by

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moderate means, they were opposed by the forces of extremism. And, little did the Sinhala nationalist extremism realise at that time that their rejection of moderation would beget Tamil nationalist extremism. One extremism, as history tells us, begets and nurtures its exact opposite. In ethnic politics, no single extremism can exist without its own enemy, the ethnic other. One is the mirror image of its own negation.

Ethnic moderation, meanwhile, is a difficult quality for one to maintain at times of heightened ethnic enmities. Moderation requires dispassionate thinking, and looking beyond the past and the present, for a future where ethnic fears, mistrust and suspicion would be set aside in shaping world views among communities. Moderation requires bravery and courage, because it does not allow us to take refuge in easily imagined propositions like 'finish the war before talking peace.' Moderation is challenging because it compels us to think and act afresh.

Moderation, to my mind, is a political virtue, particularly in a democratic system of governance. I consider Kumaratunga's proposals for devolution an exemplary exercise in political moderation. These proposals deviate from extremisms of both nationalisms and quite understandably they have already earned the wrath of unitarists as well as separatists/ confederationists. The proposals also seek to establish a middle ground where all ethnic communities can live in Sri Lanka with no mutual suspicion, fear or mistrust while maintaining their own identities. May be in ten years, in a new Sri Lanka where all communities will have learnt to settle accounts with their bitter past, the same proposals may require revision and reformulation. To put it in slightly immoderate words, the Kumaratunga proposals are the harbinger of a new Sri Lanka which the moderate majority of the people of all ethnic and linguistic communities would consider as their collective homeland.

As Sri Lanka's own experience in the recent past demonstrates, no nation can place its future in extremism. Being simple and simplistic, all extremisms guarantee disaster to nations. In ethnic relations, only moderation and accommodation would pay.

The Kumaratunga proposals envisage radical re-writing of Sri Lanka's constitution. All opposition to this constitutional project are based on specific understandings of the past. Constitutions are not made to suit the past; on the contrary, they are made for the future. For all extremists, the future is uncertain; but for moderates, the future is a challenge worthy to confront. (**Courtesy** – *The Sunday Times*, **3.9.95**).

The Politics of Territory, Border and Settlements

by Rajan Hoole

The Border Will Come To You

Among the most hopeful reflections pointing out a new vision for this country is the recently delivered Felix R. Dias Bandaranaike memorial lecture by Nihal Jayawickrama (*Sunday Times*, 2/7/95). He found in the body of international human rights covenants the means to rise above the inconclusive partisan arguments and claims that have marred political debate for 40 years. Based on this, he argued: 'The space that a minority community seeks is not negotiable, and therefore ought not to be conditonal upon, or indeed to await, a referendum or national consensus or even a ceasefire. The initiative rests with the Government, and no all-party conferences or peace talks are required to do that which the law and commonsense demand.'

Thus the approach that is needed at this critical time contrasts with the timid and defensive one displayed by Prof. G.L. Peiris and others helping in drafting a new constitution. One hopes that the Government would do considerably better in doing what is right, once it unveils the package as it is widely expected to. The fear of attacks from extreme nationalists fails to take into account the good sense the Sinhalese people have shown themselves capable of, when ably led.

Nihal Jayawickrama's personal intellectual pilgrimage brings us to certain ironies of history. When he was Secretary to the Ministry of Justice in 1973, the clash between the colonisation policies of successive governments and counter-measures by Tamils came into the open in the East. Owing to economic hardships and starvation that rose sharply at that time in the plantation regions, a large number of Hill Country Tamils made their way to the North-East to begin new lives. This was welcomed by Tamil politicians and activists who went all out to help them. On the other hand the government machinery which was geared to promoting Sinhalese settlements and inhibiting those by Tamils went into action. Emergency powers and the police were used to harass these Tamil refugees from starvation. Since there was then significant political space in which to confront the government, a need for a militant movement was not strongly felt. Two names associated with this episode in the public mind are Jayawickrama and Bradman Weerakoon, then G.A. Batticaloa. As the years went by, however, the two of them, particularly the former, came to acquire an enlightened image.

On the part of the Tamils, these were early days when the question of territory was beginning to be seen as a matter of life and death. Their experience of state sponsored Sinhalese colonisation with communal violence had evoked the strong belief: 'If you do not go to the border, the border will come to you'. This was also a precursor to the demand for a separate Tamil state.

The state machinery was itself dominated by persons who saw Sinhalese colonisation in the North-East as an ideological imperative. Faced with a Tamil challenge their reaction was one of paranoia, far out of proportion to the reality on the ground. A good inside account is given in M.H. Gunaratne's 'For a Sovereign State', with the title evoking the spirit of the thinking. Their slogan was in effect, 'If you do not push the border into the Tamil dominated North-East, the border will come to you.' In the wake of the violence of July 1983 which found the Tamil community on its knees with its leadership in disarray, minds in the Ministry of Mahaveli Development were running riot. They imagined an organised movement of Tamils moving up the Maduru Oya and Yan Oya river basins to encroach on lands designated for development and colonisation by the ministry. They in turn became party to mounting an army of Sinhalese encroachers, who led by Dimbulagala Thero, marched into the Batticaloa District and squatted on Maduru Oya lands. The Government which was under considerable pressure from India and the international community to resolve the ethnic problem was forced to call off the exercise. Gamini Dissanaike who was then minister in charge of Mahaveli Development,

though under pressure from his officials, appears to have avoided committing himself. A cautious politician, though not necessarily a principled one, he generally seems to have appreciated the difference between being today's hero and tomorrow's leader. His general disposition suggests that his complicity in the Weli Oya project, another infamous border exercise, was a reluctant one, particularly in view of his commitment to the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987. The project ran contrary to the spirit of the Accord. He left behind a last testament in the form of his manifesto for the presidential elections of 1994 before tragedy overtook him.

In his manifesto Gamini had committed himself to a federal future for this country with a view to resolving the ethnic conflict. He had been intellectually clear that the country must rise above endless ethnic sparring, if it were to find a respected place among the modern community of nations.

The statements by professionals

The three instances of men in public life I have referred to above represent a much wider drift. There are very few in mainstream political life who would argue strenuously against the federal concept, and the majority perhaps would accept it as a matter of course. In view of this the two statements by groups of eminent professionals which appeared in the week-end papers respectively of 18th June and 2nd July are puzzling. The first was against federalism and the second against a hypothetical interim council for the North-East. What is striking however are the arguments presented and the state of mind these individuals betray. The arguments are predicated on attributing to the Tamil-mind a permanent desire to separate and an inexorable desire to drive out Sinhalese colonists from the border areas.

Given the tragedies of post-independence history, they fail to see in federalism, the only arrangement perhaps, that could inaugurate a course of convergence, accommodation and the spirit of pluralism between peoples, that we as a country had lost. They see rather in the Tamil mind a reflection of their own, that was largely responsible for the deteriorating state of affairs. In 1982 the border areas of the North-East were accessible to all communities. Today much of it is accessible only to armed men. The writ of the Government does not run in much of this territory. The testimony provided by Gunaratne in his book about attitudes within his ministry at the highest levels, including senior professional engineers, tells us much about the disintegration of the Sri Lankan State. Once the Mahaveli Ministry had set itself the agenda of pushing the borders into the North-East, every Tamil official or professional became a traitor. Colleagues who had sung and drunk together as undergraduates became enemies behind a facade of formal relations. This was separation.

A link between these recent statements and the politics of paranoia which moved senior professionals in the Mahaveli Ministry during the dark days of mid-1983 occurs in the person of S.L. Gunasekera, the last signatory in both statements. He is also an important figure in Gunaratne's book. Some key sentiments in the second statement signed by 58 intellectuals, strongly reflect those voiced by him in recent television interviews – viz. 'But for these unsung and neglected heroes [i.e. settlers in border areas] the Tigers would necessarily have extended their areas of control, and even Anuradhapura may not have been "safe". . . . . The above matters apart, the North and East are in the grip of a terrible war. Only our armed forces with the help of civilians guided and directed by the forces can win that war.'

These casual words belie the brutish and sub-human existence to which Sinhalese civilians in border areas are being condemned by the politics of their elite peers, most of them obviously ignorant. This was clear from the very beginning. The Weli Oya scheme was started in mid-1984 with Mahaveli officials working closely with the military. The idea was to plant Sinhalese colonists in the border region between the Northern and Eastern provinces. The choice of pioneers was characteristic. They were drawn from among the inmates of Anuradhapura prison. Having installed them at Kent and Dollar farms from which the Tamil residents were driven away, the remaining Tamil residents in the area were systematically harassd by the convicts and the forces. Murder and rape of women were among the methods employed. On 30th November the LTTE launched its first ever massacre of Sinhalese settlers in this area, resulting in a mass exodus of settlers to Padaviya as refugees. Gunaratne recalls how he in a company which included Gunasekera went to deliver relief rations to the settlers. They were advised by Major Bohran of the Sri Lankan Army to take their rations to Weli Oya and distribute them there, rather than in Padaviya, lest the settlers get the idea of retiring from the vocation designed for them. That gives us a dark hint of their real situation. They, along with women and children, were in effect conscripted frontline troops.

The experience of these Sinhalese over the years needs to be heard to be believed. Living close to army camps they often do not know if they protect the army or the army protects them. Men recruited as home guards are commonly sent into bunkers in the night with shotguns, while soldiers violate their wives at home. The catalogue of indignities is a long one, and this is not confined to Weli Oya. This is the irony of 'unsung heroes' 'guided and directed' by the armed forces.

The signatories to these statements have been utterly insensitive to how the politics behind these border exercises have affected some of the poorer sections of the Sinhalese population, and what the Tamil experience of it has been. Several of the signatories are senior engineering dons and professional engineers – some of whose names I was familiar with when I was an engineering student. We then regarded ourselves the most enlighened body of students in the University of Ceylon! They fail to understand how this political outlook not just gave separatism an air of inevitability and contributed to the growth of the LTTE, but the resulting brutalisation of society, also precipated the JVP phenomenon and the internecine bloodletting that ensued. While many, like Nihal Jayawickrama have had the honesty, intellectual grit and sense of responsibility to learn from the past, these intellectuals it appeas have been untouched by the last twenty years. It is as though having kept their heads down for nearly 20 years, they have woken up to be led along haunted ways, strewn with corpses and skeletons, by those determined not to learn.

The Tamil experience

To understand what the border came to mean to Tamils in the East, I give here the story related to me by Kulanthaivadivel from Karaitivu. His father was among those who settled in the 16th and 24th colonies of the Gal Oya scheme. The family fled the area in 1956 owing to communal violence initiated by employees of the Gal Oya Development Board. The family moved to Pottuvil in 1958. In 1981 his sister Saraswathy married Tharmaratnam who was a farmer in Lahugala. On 16th June 1990, following the outbreak of war, Saraswathy, with her husband, two children and four other men set off to seek refuge in Thirukko-

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vil. During the journey, the five men were taken by the STF and were never seen again. To many of these people the border was a symbol that portended death, threatening everything they valued.

This fear also had the effect of transforming a pluralistic outlook into one conforming to the new political myth of a 2000 years old monolithic 'Tamil Nation' in a state of permanent conflict with the 'Sinhalese Nation'. An interesting case is that of the Cirpathakkarar who inhabit the Kallar area, south of Batticaloa. with a reputation for toughness and hardihood, they are regarded as the men of the borders. Many of their young men have fought and died in Tamil militant groups subscribing to a single Tamil nation their grandfathers knew nothing of. The latter in fact regarded the Kandy Arasan (King of Kandy) as their benefactor, whose subjects their forefathers were.

The movement to protect the borders began in earnest after the communal violence of August 1977 which resulted in a large influx of Hill Country Tamils into the North-East. Several eminent Tamils dedicated themselves selflessly to the task that experience had taught them to believe in passionately. Several of them risked their positions and indeed their life. Among them were K. Kanthasamy, a successful company lawyer who ran the Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organisation (TRRO) office in Colombo, A. David, an architect and Dr. Rajasundaram, who was in charge of the Gandhiyam with its head office in Vavuniya. Gandhiyam was engaged in settling refugees in several parts of the North-East, helped by many people and young volunteers on the ground. I was part of an expatriate group that helped the TRRO in a modest manner. When I visited Ceylon in December 1978, Kanthasamy recommended that I called on Rajasundaram in Vavuniya. When I did, Rajasundaram took me to several villages where the refugees had successfully cultivated Ulanthu. At one point he told me that it may be good to have in each village two volunteers trained in the use of arms. The idea was that if the Government of the day or the armed forces arranged for a mob to attack a village, the initial resistance would allow time for the matter to be raised politically. The need was prompted by a perception that identified the new UNP Government with mobs, anarchy and lawlessness.

I do recall Rajasundaram's wife Shanthy (nee Karalasingam) a doctor who ran Vavuniya Clinic and helped her husband in his work, striking a note of anxiety about the future of their children. Her fears as it turned out were well-founded. Rajasundaram was detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in the months leading up to July 1983 and was among the 55 Tamils murdered in Welikade Prison in the Jayewardene regime's infamous prison massacre. Under cover of the July 1983 violence the armed forces forcibly transported hundreds of refugees to disperse settlements. Having accomplished all this, the fears among Mahaveli officials and their associates was tantamount to the appearance of Banquo's ghost.

Kanthasamy had evaded detention, and perhaps the fate of the 55 Welikade detainees, by leaving for England shortly before July 1983. Five years later, following his return to this country, he disappeared after being abducted by the Tamil group EROS. By the mid-80s, Kanthasamy had been troubled by the changing character of the Tamil militant movement. He used to tell some in his circle, only partly in jest, 'I am a bachelor. I gave up much of my legal practice, and I gave up drinking and smoking. It is only for the cause of the Tamils that I live. Perhaps if I drank, I would die sooner and that may be a good thing.'

The events of the 70s bear testimony to the diverse character of the Tamil struggle and the sacrifices made. Only a section of it aligned to the TULF was overtly nationalist. It is only by forgetting this era and much of the 80s that the Tamil struggle with great injustice is represented as the LTTE's struggle.

Just after the 1977 violence, a fairly mixed group of persons had worked in tandem in the area of refugee relief. There were as a result personal ties between middle class activists and some who later played a role in the militant movement.

Even as the militant movement got under way, the former entertained a general belief that the militants would not jeopardise the refugee villages. The PLOTE is accused of compromising the Gandhiyam and giving the State a handle to crack down on it by using Gandhiyam villages for hit and run attacks on the Forces. This was very different from the defensive use of arms that Rajasundaram had told me about. Others blame figures in the Gandhiyam for getting too close to the PLOTE. The militants evidently gave little thought to the vulnerability of the defenceless Tamils, mostly from the hill country, settled in these villages.

With the scene becoming more militant, a number of persons who had worked hard earlier, taking substantial risks, retired and became mere observers. As the struggle drifted increasingly away from the well-being of the people, history had to be rewritten. There is little doubt that in the LTTE's version of history, all these people who made sacrifices for their fellows would go down as traitors, or as non-persons.

The LTTE & the borders

In June 1990 the LTTE was having talks with the Premadasa Government which had commenced 14 months earlier. On the 11th its cadre surrounded a large number of police stations in the East. In the course of an attempt to patch up matters the Government ordered the policemen to surrender with their arms. The LTTE executed hundreds of Muslims and Sinhalese among the disarmed policemen and fled into the jungles. In the resulting wrath of the Sri Lankan forces, hundreds of Tamils in border areas were the first victims of their vindictive frenzy. The resulting insecurity served the LTTE well. In turn the anger of the recruits who joined the LTTE was vented on Sinhalese and Muslim villages.

To many old hands the nature and consequences of the LTTE's tactics were very clear. They saw these as disastrous for the Tamils. One of them who had worked with Kanthsamy told me: 'Soon after the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, I went with the LTTE's Batticaloa leader Karikalan and showed him the border villages. I took him to Keviliamadu, near Arantalawa, on the Amparai – Maha Oya Road. I told him, "Look, whatever you do in future, remember that there are Tamils living in these places." What happened? Today, the Tamils are refugees. The Keviliamadu school is a Sri Lankan forces' camp, and Sinhalese settlers have been placed there to protect the forces.'

Another leading citizen in Batticaloa told me: 'I do not know if we have a future. My pessimism goes back several years. When Brigadier Dhar was in charge of the IPKF (Indian army) here, he told some of us, "If the LTTE goes on fighting like this, in five years from now you will find Sinhalese settling here in ready-made houses." I believe he was not very wrong.'

Borders and the politics of permanent conflict

There is on the one hand urban centred extreme Sinhalese nationalist opinion whose attitude to the border question drives the Tamils into a corner, lacerates the weakest segments of Sinhalese society, and allows no room

for a political settlement. On the other hand there are also Tamil nationalists, who along with the LTTE, draw sustenance from keeping the border issue alive to go on playing at their brand of politics. To this end they would resort to any distortion of the truth to maintain that the Sinhalese and their governments are incorrigibly vile. This requires that Sinhalese individuals who try to understand the Tamil problem, and any enlightened body of opinion among the Sinhalese need to be devalued and discredited.

Weli Oya, its displaced Tamils and captive Sinhalese settlers comprise the worst sore on the borders. A number of sensitive Sinhalese had come to realise that the border problems cannot be handled in the way they had been. The editor of a Sinhalese weekly visited a Sinhalese border settlement in Polonnaruwa District last year. The settlement had been largely evacuated. The editor asked a farmer why he remained there while others had fled. The farmer replied that he preferred to eke out a living there rather than lead the life of a refugee elsewhere. But he did not know if he would be alive the following week. The editor heard a few weeks later that the farmer had been killed by the LTTE. He was one among hundreds of 'unsung heroes' who died not through any desire to be heroic, but because he was poor.

The new PA Government launched a peace process towards the end of 1994, which came unstuck in April 1995 when the LTTE broke the ceasefire. A spate of arguments have been put forward by Tamil nationalists to justify the LTTE and to demonstrate the PA Government's alleged insincerity. One argument adduced to this end is that the Government made no move during the peace process to correct the gross injustice done to Tamils who lived in Manal Aru (Weli Oya). True, the Government was preoccupied with trying to respond to some strange demands by the LTTE, two of which were unreasonable. One was to remove the Puneryn Army Camp and the other to allow LTTE cadres to move in the Government controlled East with arms. There is no record of any strong or sustained demand by the LTTE concerning Weli Oya, either in talks with the PA Government or in talks with the Premadasa Government five years ago.

On the other hand, the Weli Oya issue was the subject of a campaign by the Peace With Democracy Movement. It was mainly Sinhalese who argued the case for correcting the injustice. Their Movement was having a peace rally in Parakramapura, Padaviya, on 29th January, in which settlers from Weli Oya were also to take part. During previous visits to the area, the Movement had been very much struck by the manner in which these settlers were trapped. A film crew from the presidential film unit went to Parakramapura on the same day – 29th January – when the Peace With Democracy rally was held. Sinhalese settlers from Weli Oya were interviewed on film. Their message was in short: 'We cannot take it much longer. For goodness sake, do something and get us out of here.' Living between the LTTE's threat to their life, and the oppressive and inhuman regime of the Army was hardly a thing to be desired, even if tributes were paid to them in Colombo by those ignorant of their plight.

At one level it is understandable. The LTTE did nothing to convince the Sinhalese or the Tamil people about its peaceful or democratic intentions. The demands in peace talks cited above amounted to jockeying for military advantage. Not surprisingly, its conduct left the Army and the Sinhalese feeling very nervous.

Moreover, if negotiations were seen as mainly a matter of reacting to LTTE demands, it would also have seemed foolish and burdensome to take the intitiative on Weli Oya – a matter the LTTE had not raised. On the other hand if the Government had a clear mind that the peace process was about giving confidence to the Tamil people and not appeasing the LTTE, it would have done well to address the Weli Oya issue. Even if the issue was not being addressed immediately, in terms of the Government's aims concerning peace, it had much to gain by screening the film and educating the Sinhalese masses.

I believe that had the LTTE been even a little sensitive to the well-being of Tamils, and had acted in a manner so as not to make the Sinhalese feel threatened, Weli Oya as well as most fundamental issues in the ethnic conflict could have been resolved. This does not however excuse the Government for its lack of clarity and its exaggerated fear of the elite chauvinist lobby. The fault also lies to a significant extent with Tamil nationalist politics under the shadow of the LTTE, where the truth and the people have ceased to matter.

Peace

We are today (July 1995) amidst a bitter phase of the war, with the Sri Lankan Army attempting to retake Jaffna. The cost to civilians has been enormous even if the actual fighting during the first week was minimal. All factors enumerated above have contributed to it:- viz. the absence of clear political priorities on the part of the Government, the lying and dissimulation that go into Tamil nationalist politics, the paranoia and insensitivity governing Sinhalese nationalism and the sense of inadequacy among the Armed Forces. The last two have mutually reinforced each other. Twelve years ago the Sinhalese nationalist lobby and the military establishment combined to push the border into the North-East. Today the advocates of the move find themselves talking of even Anuradhapura not being safe, or the border coming to Anuradhapura. By being insensitive to how their handling of the matter affected the Tamils, they set off reactions leading to their own discomfiture and the country towards division.

The need of the hour is a political initiative that would eliminate fear and suspicion among the communities. If one community loses the fear of living in an area where another community is in the majority, the border question would lose its sting. Once it ceases to be an issue of survival, the solution to it would not be such a contentious issue.

The most important aspect of the resolution lies in the reform of the state machinery to reflect the country's plural character. The adoption of the slogan 'If you do not go to the border, the border will come to you', ultimately has its origin in the breakdown of the state into an entity capable of articulating only a populist and communal standpoint. Communal violence, the border pushing antics of the Mahaveli Authority and the post 1956 evolution of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces into an almost exclusively Sinhalese body, are some of the extreme manifestations of this process. The sheer unpleasantness of the developing mood within the institution drove several Tamil army officers to take early retirement in the 60s and 70s. Border fears were paralleled by a growing feeling within each community that it needed an armed force comprising members of that community to protect its interests. As long as the character of the state lends credibility to this logic, there cannot be a country that is either united or at peace. The consequences of this logic have been ruinous for every community. It is left to the Government to take the initiative and reverse this course of disintegration.

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'Leave Us Alone To Decide Our Fate'

By Rev. S.J. Emmanuel,
Vicar General of Jaffna

It is very encouraging to see that professionals, intellectuals and eminent citizens of this country are at last coming out of their political silence and in groups voicing their own views about the ethnic conflict and its resolution. Leaving national issues entirely in the hands of politicians, however selfless a few of them may have been, the conflict has caused much disaster to the whole country.

During those very valuable and decisive post-independence decades, the country has been led into blind alleys and to the brink of disaster by many self-seeking politicians. The spectacle of death and destruction in the country during the last few years should open the eyes of the other leaders of this country – in the field of religion, society, culture, education, etc. to be vigilant participants in the debates about national issues and throw in their valuable contributions in the building of unity and peace in this country.

Had our leaders in these fields expressed their opinions and reactions fearlessly and early enough to what was enacted and staged in this country forty years ago, Sri Lanka would have become a model in Asia for a life of unity among multi-ethnic and multi-religious groups.

Living in Jaffna, I do not have access to all that is published these days in the Colombo Press. By some luck I had a chance to read some of them. There was one I read with greater interest because, unlike other group-letters, it was signed by a multi-ethnic group – an appeal for a new social contract (*Sunday Observer* of July 15, 1995). Though I may be late in reacting to these, still as a Jaffna citizen, I consider it important and useful to give some of my comments.

I appreciate the views clearly articulated by an eminent and multi-ethnic group living in and around the 'multi-ethnic city of Colombo'. Though it will help in dispelling doubts and clarifying some basic issues raised by some extremists and chauvinists, it articulates only the vision and sentiments mostly of the educated elitists of the capital. But definitely it falls far short of the aspirations of the vast majority of the ordinary Sinhalese and Tamils living in the South and the North of this country.

Let me briefly point out some of the misconceptions and drawbacks of this appeal as seen from the North. If these are not pointed out, I am afraid such appeals can weaken or damage the genuine aspirations of the Tamils living in the North and East and make their aspirations appear as unreasonable and extremist.

Under an undefined term 'nationalists', the group appears to include a variety of people with divergent views on both sides of the divide and still make sweeping remarks which are applicable only to extremists. They forget the fact that there is a large constituency of moderates on both sides of the divide, who will not share the group's views because they are largely based on the life-style, experience and interests of 'Colombo-based English educated elitist multi-ethnic group'. The aspirations and problems of the vast majority living outside the city are quite different.

The group tends to fight shy of nationalism as if it were a narrow communalism. The majority of Sinhalese and Tamils will definitely cherish their race and nationality without slipping into narrow racism or nationalism or evaporating into a hollow cosmopolitanism or universalism as expressed by this Colombo-based group.

Hostile

Let's have our feet firm on the ground and our head high enough to accommodate all those living in the city as well as those living in the country. Far too long, the country has been paying a high price for the power-politics, ambitions and comforts of those living at the centre. It is high time those at the centre grew to be more altruistic and thought of the peripheries too.

Nationality is not conferred on a people just by their number or from the beginning of history. It is a stage in the historical growth of a people. It is the maturation of a collective consciousness as one people with a common language, culture, land and other heritages. The Sinhalese are justly proud of becoming a true nation after independence from colonialism. And they have a right to build themselves up still more as a nation, but certainly not at the expense of other ethnic groups in this country.

The Tamils of Sri Lanka, being a minority in this country, have taken a longer time to attain this collective consciousnes as a nation, and it is bound to stay. This maturing to nationhood, is not simply based on some nostalgic memories of a kingdom and land, but more on the collective experience of the last forty years. It was a collective suffering of death and destruction in the hands of a hostile government that catalyst the maturation to nationhood.

Hence the permanent and peaceful

'Tigers Are Not Aliens'

– Rev. Emmanuel

'The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are not aliens arrived from a different planet. They are the children of the Tamil people, the sons and daughters of the Tamil soil. They cannot be isolated and separated from the Tamil masses', said Rev. Fr. S.J. Emmanuel, Vicar General of Jaffna Diocese in an interview to the BBC last week.

Answering a question on the proposed package of devolution Fr. Emmanuel said that these proposals are being discussed and consulted with those who are living outside the Northeast. 'If those proposals for devolution are addressed to the North-east region, then the people of the Northeast have to be consulted', he said.

'It is those who are not aware of the intimate relations between the LTTE and the Tamil people who claim that the Tigers and the people are separate.

'So far the proposals announced by the Government of Kumaratunga are not submitted for the consideration of the people of the Northeast. They are being discussed and debated outside the Northeast. This make one wonder whether these proposals are worked out for the resolution of the Tamil problem. If this package of devolution is intended to settle the Tamil question, then it has to be submitted to the LTTE', Fr. Emmanuel pointed out.

The Tigers are not aliens arrived from a different planet. They are the children of the Tamil people, the sons and daughters of the Tamil soil. They are fighting for the rights of their people. Their struggle is not to deprive the rights of any other community', Fr Emmanuel explained. Fr. Emmanuel further said that peace and normalcy will be restored once the armed forces withdraw from the Northeast.

solution to the ethnic crisis in this country is not to continue in an artificial political framework of one nation-state, but to mutually recognize the national status of various communities and find a political framework to live in a united Sri Lanka of many nations. Instead of clinging on to an artificial and colonial one nation-state system, and loosing loves for 'an integrity, sovereignty and unity' which were never built up, let us create a more realistic political framework that will accommodate all of us as good neighbours and citizens of one country.

Forgetting the long history of suffering in the North and East, the group speaks only, and that too rather superficially, of a history of discrimination and dares to undervalue, or even ridicule as chauvinist's bluff and myopic or masochistic, issues like the right of self-determination and of homeland. These two terms – self-determination and traditional homeland – are often misquoted and misinterpreted on the Sinhala side.

Because of the lack of any prolonged history of suffering that the people of the North and East have gone through, the Tamils and Muslims of Colombo can base their demands merely on some secondary discriminations with regard to their promotions to the highest rungs of the ladder. But the discriminations suffered by those living in the North and East go much further than the little discomfort experienced by the elite of Colombo.

Just reflect a little what the Tamils living in the North and East have gone through, not just for a short period, but for four decades, fifteen years of war and the last five years without the basic human needs and subject to shelling and bombing from all sides. Even today, the fact that we survive the army shelling of the peninsula – day and night – is a continuous miracle which none in the south or in Colombo will understand.

Besides the fact that the 'State has consistently, institutionally and deliberately discriminated against the Tamils', the four decades of death and destruction suffered by those living in the North and East have pushed them to the corner, to seek refuge in their right of self-determination and the right for a secure homeland.

Homeland

Hence the group's dismissal of the demand of the Tamils of North and East, as based on frivolous concept of 'self-determination' and 'traditional homeland' and calling such demands 'irrelevant, archaic and redundant' is

Continued on page 29

Missing the Point

[Editorial, 'Inside Report', 15 August '95, published from Jaffna, northern Sri Lanka].

Foreign Governments are responding with enthusiasm to President Kumaratunga's programme for a resolution to the national conflict. The American, Australian, British, Canadian and French Governments have already welcomed the President's devolution package and hailed her programme as a 'courageous step' towards restoring peace and finding a permanent solution to this seething national conflict **in the island**.

Everyone is well aware that uppermost in the thinking of foreign Governments is their genuine concern that the national contradiction that has ravaged the island over the past few decades is resolved; that conditions of permanent peace and political stability prevail, foreign investments are secured and encouraged and making a major contribution to the economic growth and material progress of the people. There are not many people who would dispute with such an ideal political and socio-economic order. Sadly however, such conditions of social existence are not as easily created as many foreign Governments obviously believe nor are they always the top priority of many peoples.

The eagerness of foreign Governments to see that this conflict draws to a conclusion is reflected in the hasty manner they have showered praise on Colombo prior to even hearing the voice of the people in the Northeast. If foreign Governments had patiently waited and studied the responses coming out from the Northeast they would have been left in little doubt that there is a fundamental contradiction between their assessment of the President's politico-military formulations and those of the Tamil people. President Kumaratunga's programme for a solution to the Tamil national question includes both a political and military strategy. Foreign Governments, in their response to Colombo, have underplayed the military component, taken up and highlighted the devolution package as central to a resolution of the conflict. However, for the people of the Northeast the devolution package has little meaning to their lives and has not been given even the slightest of serious consideration among the people. The devolution package has been totally overshadowed by the military strategy of the Government.

President Kumaratunga's political programme for the people and military option for the LTTE, everyone in the Northeast is well aware, is a ludicrous political position that is not only impractical but has all the hallmarks of an exercise in legitimising war. The military destruction of the LTTE, the people know very well, is not the easy task that the Government thinks nor, may we add, is it the wish of the people. Devolution of power is not an issue for a people facing the real threat of major military aggression and war. For them the central obsession at the moment is survival.

In a very subtle manner the suggestion made by foreign Governments that the LTTE lay down arms and surrender and enter the political mainstream is an articulation of their conception of how they view the solution to the military threat posed by the Sri Lanka State to the people of Jaffna. By trying to shift the responsibility for the impending military operations in the Jaffna Peninsula onto the LTTE, some foreign Governments have chosen to ignore the history of the Tamil people's struggle and underestimated the political judgement of the LTTE. To suggest that the Colombo proposals are substantial and reasonable grounds for the LTTE to lay down arms is a gross oversimplification of the politics of the North, an extra-ordinary underestimation of the LTTE's commitment and political consciousness and a much too flippant reading of the Government's genuineness. Is it fair and reasonable for foreign Governments to expect a liberation movement that has single-handedly fought and struggled for the past twenty years in pursuit of its political objectives to lay down arms and surrender on the basis of a flimsy political package advanced by a Sinhala-Buddhist State that has a notorious history of abrogating pacts and agreements. Furthermore, the proposals are as yet not finalised but have been put forward for public debate and are available for all forms of changes and modifications. To lay down arms for intangible proposals would not only be political suicide for the LTTE but national suicide for the Tamils also.

At this time when the Tamil people are faced with extreme danger and large scale destruction by the State forces, the good offices of foreign Governments to encourage the Sri Lanka State to desist from prosecuting the military option and urging the parties in conflict to return to the negotiating table is what the people expect from the international community.

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The Reality of the LTTE Must be Recognised

by Jehan Perera

The Sri Lankan Government's release of its proposals to devolve power to the regions represents its long awaited 'peace package' to end a 12 year long civil war. The government's devolution proposals have earned praise internationally and deservedly so. These proposals to resolve the ethnic conflict seek to redefine the constitutional foundations of a plural society in a time of bitterly divisive civil war. By granting federalism in all but name they go further than any other set of proposals to resolve the ethnic conflict put forward by mainstream political parties in the country.

On the other hand there has been, in effect, an unholy alliance of Sinhalese nationalists, militant Buddhist monks and the LTTE who are in opposition to the government's proposals. The brutality of the LTTE cart bomb that killed over 20 civilians in Colombo shortly after the release of the proposals, the nit-picking over certain words in the proposals and the alarmist falsehoods being spread about them are a part of Sri Lanka's present ugly reality.

There is a blatant appeal to base emotions by hardline nationalist groups. Statements such as the one put out last week by the MEP, a nationalist Sinhalese political party, that Sri Lanka has been 'a unitary state for thousands of years' would be comic if not fraught with such pernicious consequence in terms of rousing fear, anger and mistrust. This statement is historically inaccurate. It is politically misleading and is meant to sabotage the proposals on the grounds that they will lead to the dismemberment of the country.

There is a danger that in the next few weeks, as the opponents of the devolution proposals unite to attack them, that the vision that underlies and permeates the government's devolution proposals will be pushed into second place. Unfortunately the first place, even now, appears to be given to tactical considerations. Divisions are appearing within the government's own ranks concerning the devolution proposals. Even those members of the government who are standing by them are explaining the devolution proposals to their constituents as being highly tactical. The devolution proposals are being justified on the sole ground as being necessary to politically isolate and militarily defeat the LTTE.

Such an explanation of the devolution proposals may be meant to placate Sinhalese opinion in the short term. But there is a danger coming out of this tactical approach in the longer term. First, the strong anti-LTTE line in it may alienate considerable sections of the Tamil population. For all their ruthlessness and intransigence, the LTTE represents the Tamil national interest in the minds of many Tamils, including Estate Tamil leader Mr. Thondaman. The sooner that the Sinhalese recognise this reality and adjust themselves to it the better.

Second there is little guarantee that even should the government's devolution proposals be accepted by the Tamil people, the LTTE can be militarily defeated or even weakened in the short or medium term. The fact is that when the exclusively Sinhala-speaking Sri Lankan armed forces march into the Tamil-majority areas they cannot let their guard down. Any Tamil can be a potential LTTE cadre in the eyes of a soldier who faces sudden death and they are treated accordingly. In such life-threatening situations even a very fine set of devolution proposals can become irrelevant in determining the loyalties of the Tamil people of those areas.

The government's political package deserves to succeed but it also has a flaw in it that could prove fatal. The LTTE has not been brought into the picture. The devolution proposals, by transferring power to the north-east region and to the other regions, by affirming the equality of the Sinhala and Tamil languages and the commitment of the government to a plural society are meant to address the causes of the ethnic conflict. But they have not addressed, or been addressed to, the LTTE which controls part of the north-east and which can destabilise the entire country. Longer term realities strongly suggest that the government needs to start talking again to the LTTE.

The problem is that the LTTE is viewed as a demon by the government and most Sinhalese who believe that the LTTE will never wish to relinquish the near absolute power they already wield in the north in return for peace and democracy. The unilateral termination of the four month long cessation of hostilities agreement by the LTTE in April, and the military damage they inflcted on the government forces by their surprise attack, came as a stunning blow to the government and the peace lobby.

Even the usually amiable Constitutional Affairs Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris has taken a hard line on the matter of the LTTE's participation in dialogueing on the devolution proposals. He has said that the government has no intention of sending the devolution proposals to them. Earlier President Chandrika Kumaratunga said that a ceasefire would have to be on the government's terms and only if the LTTE agreed to substantially disarm themselves.

A ceasefire would certainly save lives. There is nothing more valuable than human life. But a ceasefire is not absolutely necessary for dialogue on the devolution proposals to commence between the govenment and LTTE and within the north-east also. To begin with, the LTTE has an obligation to permit the Tamil people to voice their opinion on the devolution proposals. The voice of the Tamil people in the LTTE-controlled northeast region too must be heard. By permitting this the LTTE will be showing they are willing to accept the democratic values that are necessary for genuine peace to be born in the island.

For peace to occur betwen opponents who hold contrary positions there has to be compromise. Or else one side has to be destroyed. The LTTE may reject the devolution proposals or ignore them at this time. But once the Tamil people begin to feel in their hearts that the government has made them a fair offer, sooner or later the LTTE will have to take notice and be more amenable to compromise.

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THE SUB-CONTINENTAL SCENE

Emergence of Economic Nationalism

by T.N. Gopalan

For more than four years now it has been dinned into the ears of those who could understand the message as also those who could not that economic liberalisation is the panacea for all the evils afflicting the Indian sub-continent.

Foreign exchange reserves are growing, the GDP is going up, the inflation is going down and Europeans and Americans flush with the greenback are flocking to the Indian shores, the paradise is at hand – such was the hype worked up both by the government and the media sold on the New Economic Policy.

Suddenly the NEP-men seem to have been struck with terror. They know not what has hit them and are pressing panic buttons in the wake of the abrupt cancellation of the multi-crore Enron power project by the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra.

Whether this marks the beginning of the end of a wonderful dream conjured up by the whizzkids ahead of their times, would the foreign investors lose confidence in India at large, at this rate will the spectre of a power famine begin to haunt the country in the next few years, more than anything else what this 'assertion of national will', this impetus to a swadeshi economic policy, means for the future of liberalisation – the votaries of Manmohanomics are agonising over such questions these days.

Even during the run-up to the Assembly polls in Maharashtra early this year, the Shiv Sena-BJP campaign vowed to scrap the US multi-national Enron Development Corporation's 2015 MW project at Dabhol off the state's coast.

And the alliance won – not necesarily on an anti-Enron plank is another matter. But the lame-duck Sharad Pawar government clinched the deal on Feb.25 when everyone knew by that time the saffron brigade had triumphed though the results had not yet been declared.

Six months later Chief Minister Manohar Joshi unilaterally announced the repudiation of the contract to build a 695 MW project and the cancellation of the 1430 MW Phase II regardless of the legal or financial consquences.

No competitive bids had been called, capital costs inflated, environmental angle ignored, and a high return of 29 per cent assured for the promoters and in dollars at that, the Gopinath Munde committee, which went into the deal pointed out.

It also came to light, much to the embarrassment of both Enron and Sharad Pawar, that by the February agreement the multi-national had got itself appointed as a broker to buy gas for the Dabhol project without disclosing that it was itself a gas major and could control the gas prices and supplies.

A trail of deception and intrigue, a classic case of a third world country bumpkin taken for a ride by a smooth-talking three-piece-suited westerner.

A situation tailor-made indeed for the economic nationalists to strike, and they did not fail to rise to the occasion.

The supply-siders accused the Maharashtra government of playing politics, of being short-sighted, editorial writers raised hair-raising prospects of all foreign investments drying up and reminded the Joshi administration of the huge sums it might have to fork out as compensation to the Enron and how ultimately the people would have to pay for its folly and the international and national business community tut-tutted.

Strangely for once both the left political parties and the Sangh Parivaar found themselves on the same side of the divide.

The CPM and the CPI which have always been opposed to liberalisation a la Manmohan Singh but have little clout to influence developments on that front gave full-throated cheers to the Maharashtra government for its bold step.

Even Prof. Jagidish Bhagwati, latter-day Reaganite, felt that the deal deserved to be scrapped because of its lack of transparency.

Well, the heavens have not fallen. Economic activity has not ground to a halt. Still the foreign investors are knocking at the Indian doors. Even the Enron is desperately trying to get the deal renegotiated. MNCs involved in seven other fast-track power projects are lobbying hard to clinch their respective contracts without any further delay.

'When the Patents Bill has not been passed by the parliament, no regulatory authority has been set up for the telecom and insurance sectors, the legal system has not been restructured in tune with the demands of an open economy and so on, the scrapping of Enron has come as a body blow to New Delhi's credibility,' lament the NEP-men.

However, Mr. S. Gurumuthy, a co-convenor of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM), (National Awareness Movement), and who led the anti-Enron campaign, says, 'The coming days are of the market and not of the capital. . .we are not a banana republic and we will not be dictated to by anyone. . .If investors could still queue up before Beijing notwithstanding Tienanamen or Wung Fu, why should we worry. After all Dabhol is not Tienanamen. . .'.

Incidentally the SJM is an RSS-front organisation, and the BJP is likely to make economic nationalism a major plank. Though it may not oppose liberalisation as such, it could still hope to cash in on the resentment of those who have not yet benefited by the 'trickle down' and of those sections in the business community affected by the entry of the MNCs.

Even the mid-term appraisal of the Eighth Plan by the Planning Commission has blown to smithereens the loud claims of successful economic management and has shown whether in GDP or employment generation or growth in manufacturing, the performance has fallen far short of the targets.

In the circumstances then the swadeshi movement could provide the much-needed corrective to the near laissez faire policies pursued by the Rao government. But the danger is that the Sang Parivaar come as a package and, anyway they accord priority to the anti-Muslim crusade.

Talking to Gurumurhy immediately after the controversy over his own involvement in the drafting of the Munde Committee report broke out was a revelation.

For thim there is no divorcing the economic nationalism from the cultural, read Hindutva. 'Islam is an intolerant region. . .Ours is essentially a Hindu culture. . .The Muslims have to fall in line. . .Mosques in Kashi and Mathura have to be surrendered. . .'

In fact as the elections are nearing the saffron brigade has stepped up its campaign to arouse the 'Hindu consciousness.' There has been some flexing of muscles both at Kashi and at Mathurah – but for some panic reaction, some brinkmanship on the part of the Rao government, the minority Mayawati regime in the UP might even have looked on helplessly as the Viswa Hindu Parishad overran the Idgah in Mathurah in mid-August. Ultimately the VHP had to call off its plans to create trouble in order to save Mayawati who survives in power thanks to the BJP support.

The developments in Kashmir no doubt aggravates the communal situation in the rest of the country and prove cannon-fodder to the BJP campaign.

One of the five foreign tourists kidnap-

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Mohajirs: Caught in a Political Crossfire

(by Parwez Hafeez)

Only the most incorrigible optimists or the utterly naive would have expected that peace talks between the Benazir Bhutto government and the Mohajir Qaumi Movement would succeed in stopping the bloodshed and restoring peace in strife-torn Karachi. In any peace talks whether they take place in Islamabad, Grozny or Gaza one should not expect a miracle that will resolve years old disputes within a few hours of dialogue and usher in peace overnight. What is important about any peace negotiation is the decision of the warring parties to thrash out their differences around a table and not on the streets. But the success of any peace talks depend entirely on the sincerity, honesty and genuine desire for peace on both sides.

That Ms. Bhutto was not sincere became evident when she invited the MQM for a dialogue and at the same time launched a massive crackdown on the Mohajirs in Karachi. The day MQM announced the names of the persons who would constitute the negotiating panel rep-

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ped by a little known militant group on July 9 met with a brutal end and the remaining are still held hostage by the Al Faran, apparently propped up by Pakistan.

The news of the discovery of the decapitated body of the young Norweigian tourist, Hans Christian Ostro, sent shock waves through the nation and abroad and the saffron wallas are baying for blood, and for the execution of all the militants and suspected militants in government custody, or at least of those whose release is being demanded by the Al Faran besides intense drive against the militant groups in the valley, never mind the problems that might be encountered by the people at large.

The government headed by Rao who only a few months ago promised anything short of azadi (freedom) would not commit itself now even on an autonomous councill

All this is bound to reverberate all over India as the VHP-Bajrang Dal combine take out their Ekmata Yatya in October, from nine different points in the country and converge in Nagpur.

More trouble lies in store for the nation.

resenting the Mohajirs, the Pakistan interior minister Major-General (retired) Naseerullah Babar who, according to Altaf Hussain is the reincarnation of General Dyer, arrived in Karachi to personally supervise the police and paramilitary offensive on the Mohajirs.

The police and the rangers laid a siege of many Mohajir districts in Karachi and unleashed a reign of terror on the residents. Indiscriminate firings, arbitrary arrests and high-handed raids on their homes made life hell for the thousands of Mohajirs living in those impoverished neighbourhoods of the port city. In an effort to brutalise the MQM leaders into submission, the arrested persons were inhumanly tortured in police custody and jails.

While on the one hand, Benazir tried to silence the growing criticism of her refusal to hold talks with the MQM, on the other, she stepped up state terrorism on the hapless Urdu-speaking citizens of her country. One explanation of this blow-hot-blow-cold policy of the Benazir government could be that it sought to browbeat the MQM leaders into entering the negotiations on her terms. Her effort to find a negotiated settlement of the Karachi crisis, therefore, is not a sign of her change of heart *vis a vis* the Mohajirs as has been mistakenly observed by many analysts. At best it can be called a change of strategy.

As for Altaf Hussain, the four round of talks that took place in Islamabad and Karachi, are a vindication if not triumph of his stand. The most important point that the charismatic self-exiled MQM leader proved by forcing the Bhutto government to agree to these peace talks was that his party was a powerful and legitimate political force which enjoyed the complete support of a sizeable ethnic and linguistic population of Pakistan and not a terrorist outfit that a hysterical Benazir has been trying to project. Benazir who was averse to holding any dialogue with the MQM unless the Mohajirs first lay arms and surrender the wanted militants, had to eat humble pie and agree to the peace talks without any pre-conditions. By announcing to hold peace talks with a negotiating team appointed by Altaf Hussain whose extradition she had demanded only a week ago from Britain, Benazir herself unwittingly confirmed that her vilification campaigns against the MQM supremo had no substance in them.

That the Bhutto government had grudgingly and under international pressure agreed to a negotiated settlement of the Karachi problem and had no genuine longing for pece was once again demonstrated by the brutal killing of an MQM ex-councillor, Aslam Sabzwari. Immediately after Sabzwari's arrest, the MQM leaders had expressed their apprehensions that he would be bumped off in police custody and they had even appealed to the President Farooq Leghari to ensure his safety. But a vindictive government that later unsuccessfully tried to pass off his cold-blooded extra-judicial murder as a case of fatal heart attack, in a blatant disregard for the human rights of its citizens, tortured him to death. This killing had the potential of ending the peace talks even before they had begun. The MQM leaders, justifiably outraged at this display of perfidy and brutality, were reluctant to go ahead with the proposed talks.

But correctly reading Benazir's shrewd gameplan, they realised that their refusal to participate in the talks would give the wily Prime Minister an opportunity to project them as inflexible, unreasonable and enemies of peace who were not interested in resolving the lingering problem.

Altaf Hussain, as a gesture of goodwill, announced the withdrawal of the two-day weekly strike so that the peace talks could be held in a peaceful atmosphere. But Benazir showed no such magnanimity and continued the police action against the Mohajirs even while the talks were on.

Although the chief negotiator of the government, Mr. N.D. Khan, the federal law minister and his MQM counterpart Mr. Ajmal Dehlvi expressed satisfaction at the 'environment of confidence' that was created between the two sides, the fact remains that the first two rounds of these peace talks were exhausted in trading charges and counter-charges between the two sides. The MQM team, for instance, accused the government of suppressing the

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constitutional rights of 22 million Mohajirs and treating them as second class citizens of Pakistan. It also accused the Bhutto government of denying proper representations of the Mohajirs in proportion to their populations, in the provincial and federal assemblies, in the armed forces, police and other government services. They constituted more than 50 percent of the total population of the province of Sindh but their representation in the provincial administration and police is only one per cent. In Karachi, Hyderabad and other towns of Sindh, the police departments have 100 per cent domination of non-Mohajirs. The MQM, in short put the PPP government in the dock for following a policy of injustice, discrimination and repression against the Mohajirs. The government chief negotiator Mr. Khan held the MQM squarely responsible for the continuing ethnic and sectarian violence in Pakistan. Parroting the line of his Prime Minister who has been openly accusing the MQM of being 'foreign-funded, foreign-trained, foreign-motivated and involved in an insurgency against the state', he charged the MQM of endangering the stability and solidarity of the country. Some of the terms and conditions that an extremely calculating Pakistani government presented to the MQM negotiating team are nothing short of a boobytrap. For instance, accepting the goverment's demand of closing the terrorist-camps that are being run in India and handing over the India-trained militants to Islamabad, will be tantamount to acknowledging that Altaf was waging a proxy war inside Pakistan at New Delhi's behest.

Even the fourth round of the peace talks ended in a stalemate. Now it has become absolutely clear that following a deliberately planned strategy, the Benazir government is putting forward impossible demands to the MQM. To be fair to the MQM, in order to make the negotiations fruitful, it accepted a climbdown from its original 18-point charter of demands. At the conclusion of the first phase of the fourth round, Mr. Dehlvi presented a highly truncated four-point formula which would end the prevailing chaos and restore order in Karachi if implemented. The government side would give its response after consulting the provincial and federal governments during the next phase of the fourth round of the ongoing peace talks.

Meanwhile Karchi continues to burn. In the past 18 months more than 2000 people have been killed in Karachi, 500 of them in the last two months. The situation further deteriorated because of the two-day weekly strikes that the MQM imposed on Karachi following the gang-rape of the teenaged sister of its activist, during which the port city is closed down and life grinds to a half. Karachi known as the commercial and industrial hub of Pakistan, has begun to look like a ghost city. Ironically, Benazir has made several foreign trips to seek investments while the escalating violence and the appalling law and order conditions have badly affected the existing trade and industry in the country. During her recent visit to Malaysia, Ms. Bhutto said with a straight face that the prevailing anarchy in Karachi has not affected the economic prospects of Pakistan while the truth is that the industrial sector in the commercial capital is suffering a production loss of Rs. 24 billion every day. Altaf Hussain and Benazir Bhutto are engaged in a sparring match. Both of them are self-centred, authoritarian individuals whose intransigence has turned the streets of Karachi into a battlefield on which the MQM activists and the law enforcing agencies are locked in a bloody war of attrition. The tragedy is neither Benazir nor Altaf Hussain seem to care that it is the poor hapless Mohajirs who are literally as well as metaphorically caught in the crossfire.

(Courtesy of *Asian Age* 26.7.95).

The Great Escape

T.S. Subramaniam
in Vellore & Madras

It was the height of irony. Her Government had rescued Tamil Nadu from 'the dark days of arms culture' and converted it into 'a peace park for development.' So announced Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha at Fort St. George, the seat of government in Madras, on Independence Day. But just that morning, a group of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) militants had made their way to the State capital after pulling off an audacious escape from detention at another fort, in Vellore, some 150 km away. They were among 43 militants including four women who escaped from the top-security camp in Tipu Mahal in the fort after digging a 153-foot-long tunnel, sliding down a rope from the ramparts of the fort and swimming across a 200-foot-wide moat filled with water.

The daring escape certainly embarrassed the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) Government, which had vowed to root out the LTTE menace in the State after the Rajiv Gandhi assassination in May 1991. It was the ninth such ecape by LTTE militants in the last three years. The previous one took place on February 27 when nine militants escaped from their cells in the high-security Madras Central Prison (*Frontline*, April 7).

Jayalalitha herself did not react publicly to the latest event, but her Government ordered a judicial inquiry by retired Madras High Court judge T.N. Singaravelu.

The escape came to light on the morning of August 15 under strange circumstances. Gunaseelan and Shankar, reportedly the brain behind the break-out, had reached Madras. When they were travelling in a cycle-rickshaw in T. Nagar around 4 a.m., two patrolling policemen stopped them. Immediately Shankar swallowed cyanide. A search of his person revealed a bus ticket from Vellore to Madras. His shirt had been tailored at Vellore. The policemen took Gunaseelan to the nearby Pondy Bazaar police station and handed him over to a head constable before returning to Shankar, who had died by then. Meanwhile, the head constable took Gunaseelan in an autorickshaw and dropped him off at Teynampet. Gunaseelan vanished. (The head constable was later suspended from service.)

City Police Commissioner K.K. Rajasekharan Nair soon reached the spot, and police officials contacted Vellore. That was when the escape came to light. Immediately, a State-wide alert was sounded.

The same morning, luck did not hold for another group of 11 who had reached Madras and bought tickets to Madurai at the Egmore railway station. Ten of them were seated on a bench around 10.40 a.m. and chatting amongst themselves when a railway policeman passed by. Their Sri Lankan Tamil accent alerted him. When he spoke to them, they showed him the tickets. Meanwhile, other railway

police persons surrounded the militants. When they tried to search their bags, Rajan, one of them, started passing cyanide to the others. Rajan himself swallowed some and died. Two others were hospitalised. A couple of militants tried to escape after biting the hands of policewomen but all seven were overpowered.

Shankar, the eleventh member of the group, had gone out to buy food. Realising what was happening, he fled. He tried to reach a Sri Lankan Tamil refugees' camp at Keelambedu on the way to Mamallapuram but was caught on the way. He revealed they had split themselves into groups to go to Rameswaram and reach Jaffna by sea. According to him, they had escaped because they had 'a tremendous urge to rejoin the LTTE to fight against the Sri Lankan Army.' His group came to Madras to catch a train to Rameswaram but missed it. So they bought tickets to Madurai to proceed to Rameswaram.

And on August 20, one more militant, Sundar, was arrested following a chance encounter during a prohibition raid near Keeramangalam in Pudukkottai district. Two others, however, escaped.

Of the nine ecapes by LTTE militants from prisons and special camps in Tamil Nadu, the latest was the most methodical in planning and execution. The police, citing the judicial inquiry, declined permission to reporters to see the tunnel on August 15. This generated suspicion about the tunnel story, for the logistics of digging such a passage are staggering. Where did the militants get the implements? Where did they dump the excavated soil, which must have made up several truckloads? How did the digging remain undetected?

On August 18, Director-General of Police (DGP) V. Vaikunth and Additional DGP Walter I. Dawaram took reporters to Tipu Mahal, showed them the tunnel and explained how the militants had done it.

The tunnel, leading from the camp to the ramparts of the fort, is three feet in width and height for a length of about 80 feet. Then it broadens out to six feet and again narrows down to three feet. It took about four months to finish.

The militants apparently went on digging without knowing where it would lead. When they encountered the solid foundation of the ramparts after 153 feet, they dug their way to the surface. They camouflaged the exit with wooden doors and rafters, and grass.

The digging was done with iron pipes fashioned into crowbars. Stainless steel eating plates were used to scoop out earth. The pipes, the plates, the doors and the rafters were found at the exit point. Vaikunth stated that 'nothing (that is, of implements) came from outside.'

After crawling through, the militants surfaced through the exit, inches away from the ramparts. They tied a rope to one of the granite blocks, slid down and swam across. On reaching the bank, they changed clothes and fled. The rope was dangling from the ramparts during the mediapersons' visit.

Tipu Mahal is an imposing, rectangular structure with 118 rooms on the ground and first floors. The militants could stay in any of these. In the big courtyard there are neem trees and a pillared mantapam. The militants often slept on the mantapam, enjoying the breeze. The mats and pillows of 34 militants, who did not choose to escape, were lying on the mantapam. One has to pass through three iron gates to enter Tipu Mahal. Opposite the first gate is a bunker with Tamil Nadu Special Police (TSP) Men armed with light machine guns.

After the killing of Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) leader K. Padmanabha and 13 others in Madras in 1990, seventy-seven LTTE militants were detained in Tipu Mahal under Section 3(2)(e) of the Foreigners Registration Act because they had come to India without passports or visas. While the State Government could only detain them under this Section, it is the Centre which was empowered to arrest them under Section 3(2)(g) of the Act.

Vaikunth said Tipu Mahal was 'neither a prison nor a top-security area'; it was just a 'special camp for housing the militants to reestrict their movement.' They werenot allowed out of the enclosure.

The camp comes under the revenue authorities, and not the Inspector-General of Police (Prisons). The tahsildar is its commandant.

Dawaram said that unlike in a prison, there were no regular roll-calls; they were taken only on Saturdays. There were no warders or jail superintendents, and advocates and relatives coud meet the militants, he said.

The Superintendent of Police (S.P.) Of North Arcot Ambedkar district, of which Vellore is the headquarters, was in charge of the camp's security. (The S.P., Ashutosh Shukla, has been placed under suspension.) Two companies of the TSP guarded it. There is a barbed wire fence all round Tipu Mahal and surrounding its roof, and there are watch towers manned by TSP personnel. Food brought from outside was given to the militants at the mantapam.

Hyder Mahal, where the militants' relatives, including women, were detained, is adjacent to Tipu Mahal. A wall separates the two and movement of people between the two Mahals is prohibited. During an earlier escape attempt, the male militants from Tipu Mahal tried to enter Hyder Mahal by smashing the wall in one of the three rooms in the left-hand corner. This was discovered and the two doorways that led to these rooms were sealed. Next to these doorways is a staircase leading upstairs.

The militants did not give up. They removed a stone slab on the first floor, above one of the sealed rooms, came down and began work on the tunnel with iron pipes removed from the bathroom. Dawaram admitted that blocking the entrances to the rooms 'worked to the militants' advantage' because officials could not see what was happening inside.

Another top police official said the militants did 'systematic' and slow work because they had all the time in the world, idling as they were in Tipu Mahal.' They dug about a foot a day and dumped the earth in the three rooms.

Vaikunth said the militants had invented a 'camouflage' to prevent the detection of the removed stone slab. If any officer came upstairs, they would quickly push the slab in place, put an electric oven on it and pretend to be cooking.

Informed sources said that with electricity available, the militants worked at night as well. They first dug 10 feet below the ground level because the foundation of Tipu Mahal went down to seven feet. The tunnel was ready on August 1. The sources said the well-consolidated earth helped the work. 'It would have been difficult for the militants if it had been loose soil because such soil would have kept caving in.' Besides, there were 'no natural rocks' to block progress. Boulders have been used only in the foundation and ramparts of the fort.

After 153 feet, the militants encountered the foundations of the ramparts, made of boulders, and so they dug upwards and reached the surface.

Dawaram said that on the night of August 14, when the escape took place, there was 'heavy rain and a power cut.' Asked why 34 militants chose to stay back, he claimed 'they did not want to escape because they had food and everything here.'

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The fort houses the Jalakanteswara temple noted for its splendid sculptures of prancing horses and scenes from Hindu mythology, including a Ramayana panel. There are also several government offices and the Police Recruits' School within its compound. The fort and the temple were built in the 16th century A.D. by Bommi Reddy, a chieftain of the Vijayanagara empire of which Vellore and Ginjee were two strongholds.

In the 18th century, Hyder Ali, who fought against the British, conquered areas up to Vellore. Whether he occupied the fort is not known. His son Tipu Sultan also fought the British and took control of the fort for some time. After Tipu was defeated, his son and relatives were kept prisoners in two buildings there. These buildings were late named Hyder Mahal and Tipu Mahal. the Nawabs of the Carnatic and the British made additions to the fort. After Independence, the fort and the temple were declared protected monuments and put under the control of the Archaeological Survey of India (Madras Circle).

The escape led to fresh demands from Opposition parties that the Centre should dismiss the Jayalalitha Government. Congress(I) and AIADMK MPs clashed in the Lok Sabha. Congress(I) MP Mani Shankar Aiyar demanded that Jayalalitha should resign or the Centre should dismiss her Government because it was 'incapable' of governing the State. He charged that the special camp had been run like a 'holiday camp'.

Tamil Nadu Congress(I) president Kumari Anandan blamed the 'active connivance' of the officials and the 'inept handling' of the situation by the State Government. K. Ramamurthy, who heads the breakaway faction of the Congress(I), wanted Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to dismiss the Government because Jayalalitha would not resign on her own. Janata Party president Subramanian Swamy said the escape was a 'further confirmation' of Jayalalitha's 'understanding with the LTTE.' But Congress(I) spokesman V.N. Gadgil took the line that the party did not subscribe to Mani Shankar Aiyar's view.

AIADMK member M. Janardhanam accused the Congress(I) of 'politicising' the issue and claimed that those who escaped were not militants.

In a statement in the Lok Sabha, Union Minister of State for Internal Security Rajesh Pilot said repeated escapes by LTTE militants had posed 'a grave security threat to the country' and wanted the State Government to be vigilant to prevent their recurrence. He disclosed that the Centre was 're-examining' the State Government's plea to delegate powers to it to imprison the militants under the Foreigners' Act. But he wanted the State Government to undertake a serious review of the 'on-ground implementation of the existing provisions available to it.'

At the end of the day, several questions remained unanswered. Why did the Centre drag its feet on a representation forwarded to it by the Tamil Nadu Government that the militants in various camps wanted to be sent back to Sri Lanka? How did the four women LTTE militants get into Tipu Mahal where only men were detained? Why did not the State police ask for custody of the captured militants to interrogate them? Did not the TSP men atop the watchtower near the exit point of the tunnel hear the militants swimming across? From where did the militants get the cyanide capsules? Were these supplied to them inside Tipu Mahal or did they get the capsules outside after the escape, which meant the LTTE's network in the State was still intact?

(Courtesy of *Frontline*, September 8, 1995).

Jayalalitha Hosts Wedding Extravaganza

Chariots rolled and clarions blew at India's most talked about wedding in recent times on a night that seemed straight out of history books. Jayalalitha Jayaram, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu State, recreated the grandeur of ancient kings at the wedding of her foster son, V.N. Sudhakaran, with N. Sathyalakshmi, granddaughter of noted Tamil film actor Sivaji Ganesan.

Four horses specially brought from Saudi Arabia drew a chariot with the bridegroom from the temple to the wedding site where arrangements were made to seat more than 200,000 people. The three-kilometre procession from a temple in South Madras to the main venue was said to be the most colourful event the state had ever witnessed.

Newspapers speculated wildly on the money spent on the preparations, with estimates ranging from Rs. 750 million (about $25 million) to Rs. 2.5 billion (over $80 million). A major part of the state administration, including top ministers and bureaucrats, were said to have been overseeing wedding arrangements for over two months.

'This marriage has made even the marriage of Prince Charles of England look like a poor man's nuptial,' said S. Thirunavukarasu, a state opposition leader of the MGR-ADMK (M.G. Ramachandran-Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) party. The groom Sudhakaran, a nephew of the Chief Minister's controversial friend Sasikala, is the managing director of the Madras-based Super Duper Cable Television Company.

Preparations for the wedding started on an astronomical scale two months ago at a 50-acre site on the banks of the Adyar river in south Madras. The pomp was visible even on the invitation. Ministers, top film stars and influential people close to the ruling All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) received it on a silver platter worth Rs. 20,000 (about $700), bearing a silk dhoti and sari.

But the extravaganza was mired in controversies of alleged misuse of official position. Opposition leaders and voluntary organizations questioned the lavish spending on the wedding. The arrangements raised questions about the source of the money and Kumari Anandhan, president of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC), demanded an income tax department probe on the expenses.

Two petitions were filed by the Lawyer's Association in the Madras High Court alleging misuse of official facilities and illegal tapping of the power supply for the celebrations.

While responding to one of the petitions which came up for hearing, the High Court warned the Tamil Nadu government, directing the authorities to produce all files to show how sanctions had been obtained for the supply of electricity to the marriage venue. But the court ruling could not stop the organizers from going ahead with a grand marriage procession, called the *mapillai azhaippu* in the Tamil language.

The procession was headed by a 27-member group of mounted police, followed by a police band. Dance troupes performed various folk forms like 'Karagattam' and 'Oyilattam,' followed by a procession led by Jayalalitha and Sasikala.

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really myopic and masochistic, not the other way about.

Is the right of self-determination of the Tamils intended to go against the rights of the Sinhalese? Is it truly an unreasonable demand of the minority to snatch away from the majority an unproportionately greater part of the country? Nothing is further from the truth.

The Tamils of the North and East are pushed into a corner by the sad events of four decades. Asserting the right of self-determination was not there in the forties or fifties. Nor was the claim for a traditional homeland.

The Tamils of the North and East are disappointed and disillusioned by the discriminatory and anti-Tamil politics of the democratically elected Sinhala majority governments. The democracy based on the will of the majority has been directed against the rights of the minorities and what is the guarantee even in the future, that the referendum and parliamentary majority, will give justice to the minorities.

Even the proposed constitutional reform is to be determined by the will of the majority Sinhalese. Thus the will of the majority is used to decide inviolable sacred rights of a people. Hence the Tamils cry out, 'leave us alone to decide our fate as a people. We have no more faith in any election where the majority Sinhala will be used to decide what should be done with the Tamils.'

Similarly, the Tamil demand for a homeland, is not just based on some nostalgic or archaic facts of history. (Prof. K.M. Silva and others like Gamini Iriyagolla may split hairs and argue about the existence of past kingdoms and their territories. That is not the sole basis for the demand of the Tamils). The demand is based on a congruence of many factors, including our past history as a kingdom. But the strongest reason for the demand springs from the recent history of suffering, death and destruction in the hands of the majority Sinhala and its governments.

Every Tamil, living or dead, in the North and East of this country, as well as the many thousands who have fled from these areas and waiting to return, have suffered and were humiliated in one way or another for being a Tamil. This is their position today *vis-a-vis* the State and its Forces.

Failure

The demand for a homeland is not against the rights of the Sinhalese, nor were they to do damage to their rights or to snatch away unjustly what rightly belongs to them. The arid zones of the North and East were still open to the Sinhalese who freely settled in these areas as did many Tamils in Colombo or in the South.

But the State-aided colonization of the traditionally Tamil areas with a sinister motive of driving away the Tamils or making them everywhere as helpless minorities led to real fears of the Tamils. The overall discrimination of the Tamils on racial basis coupled with this pushing away of Tamils, increased in the Tamil consciousness the need for a secure region where they will exercise their self-determination and by their hard labour build freely their flat dry zone as their dear homeland.

The Tamils have tried sincerely and democratically for many decades to live under a democratic and a unitary State. It has been a dismal failure. The result has been a long history of deception by the Govenment, betrayal by their own leaders, oppression, suffering, death and destruction in the hands of State Forces etc. These continue even today at this eleventh hour. Past experiences have made it evident to them.

Better live as peaceful and united neighbours in one country rather than as 'one nation-state' without a moment of self-respect, security and peace.

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held. Officers in charge of police stations were also directed to submit a list and details of those detained to the government appointed Human Rights Task Force.

But the tortured bodies continued to float and be fished out of rivers and lakes around the capital, and the government appeared to be clueless about the elements that were responsible. However, the disappearance of a son of a lawyer and his subsequent reappearance probably revealed that those responsible were within the security apparatus.

The surfacing of the mutilated corpses in the lake surrounding the high-security parliamentary complex in mid-August sent shock waves through the nation and jolted the government to take strong action. It revived memories of the late 1980s when, under the previous UNP regime at the height of the army's drive to crush a two-year old insurrection by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), government sponsored death squads abducted and tortured suspects and left their bodies burning in the streets, hanging from trees and floating in rivers.

News of the police breakthrough in the investigation came after the interrogation of the seven civilians arrested in connection with the murders. The civilians, two Muslims and five Tamils, are believed to have been used as informants by the Special Task Force.

Nevertheless, human rights activists say that President Kumaratunga had honoured her election pledge of a more 'transparent' government by ordering a police probe into killings. 'The very fact that the police have made these startling disclosures is in itself in keeping with the government's pledge of transparency,' said a human rights lawyer. During the earlier regime, he said, killings of this nature would have been swept under the carpet and no one would have known who was responsible.

'The way the government has investigated the present case indicates it is serious about punishing the perpetrators,' said Charles Abeyasekera, president of the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE).

A Western diplomat also said the government's action was seen as a message to the international community that death squads won't be tolerated in present day Sri Lanka.

However, human rights activists say the government will have to be better informed of the activities of its military, police and intelligence wings if the record on human rights is to be kept clean.

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al and practical teachings and his opposition to the caste system, which he applied to politics in South Africa and India. Unlike any Western political philosophy from Plato to Marx, this philosophy is based on love and compassion.

Accepting this philosophy in Sri Lanka would mean that Sri Lankans should set aside the anger and hatred which has resulted from the tragic ethnic conflict and implement the devolution proposals. Otherwise Sri Lanka could easily become the Lebanon of South Asia, and we may continue to fight among ourselves for many centuries as Europeans did. The choice is ours.

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Among those who attended the wedding were three state Chief Ministers and two Federal ministers, besides former governors and chief ministers. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, who had been invited for the wedding by Jayalalitha personally, did not turn up.

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Jaffna Hindu uncle *seeks educated attractive partner, 25-30, for nephew, M.Sc., 5'7", 34, in good UK employment. Send horoscope, details. M 812 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek partner for pretty daughter, 23, 5'5", CIMA finalist in employment in Colombo. Send horoscope, details. M 813 c/o Tamil Times.*

Hindu parents of good standing *seek fair, accomplished bride of similar status in late twenties for educated, smart, British citizen son, engaged in good business with other assets. M 814 c/o Tamil Times.*

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Latha Shandra *daughter of Mr. T. Visvendran & late Mrs. Sarojini Visvendran and* **Mathew Owen** *son of Mr. & Mrs. Kirk of Culceth, Cheshire on 29.7.95 at the Newchurch, Culceth.*

Thayalan *son of Mr. & Mrs. K. Yogendran of 1 Florence Road, Sanderstead, South Croydon and* **Dr. Shobana** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. P. Sathananthan of 32 Dulverton Road, Selsdon, South Croydon on 27.8.95 at Hammersmith Town Hall.*

Suresh *son of the late Mr. N. Rajendram and Mrs. R. Rajendram of 34 Jalan 8/14, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia and* **Vatsala** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. C. Thirunavukkarasu of 28 Foxmead Close, Enfield, Middlesex, UK on 28.8.95 at Highgate Hill Murugan Temple, London N6.*

Shanthan *son of Mr. & Mrs. P. Pathmanathan of Golden Apartments, 29/1 Sarojini Street, T. Nagar, Madras and* **Dharshini** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. V. Thirunavukarasu of Arun Apartments, 207/B1 Lakshmi Ammal Street, Aminjakarai, Madras on 6.9.95 at Breeze Hotel, Madras.*

Surendran *son of Mr. & Mrs. R.R. Kumarakulathungam of 7 Latta Court, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648, USA and* **Dr. Inthumathy** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. M. Vamadevan of C 3/1 Bambalapitiya Flats, Colombo 4 on 10.9.95 at Miami Wedding Hall, Colombo 6.*

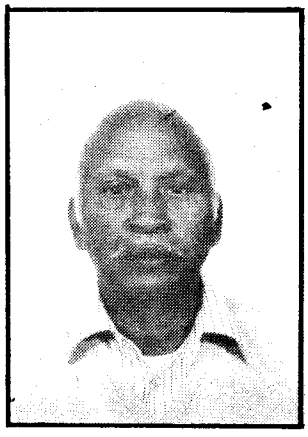
Sooriya Kumar *son of Mr. & Mrs. V. Subramaniam of Saraiady, Puloly South, Sri Lanka and* **Sivananthini** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. P. Thambyrajah of 155 Earlshall Road, Eltham, London SE9 1PJ On 10.9.95 at The Borough Hall, Greenwich, London SE10.*

Varatheesan *son of Mr. & Mrs. Natesan of Colombo and* **Malini** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mahesan of Seramban, Malaysia at Highgate Murugan Temple on 20.8.95.*

Lavan Chelvakumar *son of Mr. & Mrs. Nagaratnam of Karainagar, Sri Lanka and* **Jeya Kala** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kumarasamy of 93 Silverleigh Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 6DZ on 27.8.95 at Shree Ganapathy Temple, Wimbledon, London SW19 9AD.*

OBITUARIES

Dushyanthan Senathirajah *(Student, Leeds University), dearly beloved son of the late Dr. Jeyarajan Senathirajah (Raju) and Dr. Manohari Senathirajah and beloved brother of Carthiga, died on 24th August 1995 following a road accident – 51 Thornhill Road, Steeton, Keighley, W.Yorks BD20 6TN.*



Mr. Tambiraja Packiarasa *of Kandermadam, Jaffna; Retired P.H.I.; President of the Academy of Fine Arts, London and Director of 'Sa-Pa- Sabah (London branch); beloved husband of Retired Lecturer, Sangita Vidwan Saraswathy Packiarasa; affectionate brother of Dr. Selvarajah, late Mr. Shanmugarajah, Dr. Poopalarajah, Mrs. Rajeswary Ganesan, Mrs. Rajamani Ganesananthan, Yogarajah and Shivarajah; loving father of Jayanthi, Shanthi and Hamsananthi; devoted father-in-law of Shivanandan, Arulanandam and Thayaparan and darling grandfather of Sai Prakash, Sangeethasayini, Abinash, Thiviyan, Sanchikai and Dhanusha passed away in London on 7th August 1995. His cremation was well attended by friends and relatives at Mortlake Crematorium, Kew, London. The members of the family extend their* **grateful thanks** *to all who visited them, assisted in various ways, participated in the funeral rites, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy. May his soul rest in Heaven in peace. – 13 Durham Avenue, Hounslow, Middx. TW5 0HG. Tel: 0181 571 2104.*

IN MEMORIAM

Cherished Memories. *In our mind, a constant thought; in our heart a silent sorrow; but always with pride and love. Ever present, ever missed, ever loved, ever remembered, especially on this the first anniversary of your passing away on the 24 September 1994.* **Mr. Ponnudurai Narendra Nathan,** *most dearly beloved and adoring husband of Gnanambal; dearest loving and proud Appa to your children, Dr. Thrinayani Jegathambal, Dr. Mrs. Sowmya Wijayambal, Mrs. Sobhana Meenambal, Dr. Mrs. Priyadarsani Brahathambal, Adhithya Thrilochanan, Mrs. Vasutharini Girijambal, Agasthya Ponnambalam and Ambika Dhakshayani; father-in-law of Dr. P. Arulampalam, S. Raveendran, T. Ilangovan and R. Srikanthan; darling dearest Thaththa to your grandchildren, Abhirami Janani Raveendran, Amarnath Thirumadhavan Raveendran, Nirmala Arulampalam, Janaki Saruhasini Srikanthan, and Janarthanan Ragavan Ilangovan; A man of great courage, integrity, humour, wit and wisdom; whose kindness and generosity knew no bounds, you are greatly missed forever but never forgotten, and are always in the thoughts of all your family and friends. God Bless. (Address 53 Crossways, South Croydon, Surrey, CR2 8JQ).*

'If I should go before the rest of you
Break not a flower, nor inscribe a stone.
Nor talk of me in a Sunday voice
But be the usual selves that I have known.
Weep if you must, parting is hell;
But life goes on – so sing as well.'

Joyce Grenfell,
An Invisible Friendship.

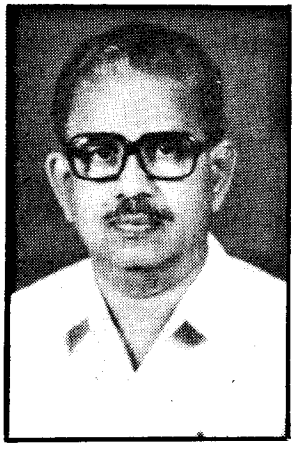
IN MEMORIAM

In Loving Memory of
Our Beloved Daddy
T.J. Rajaratnam
(Retired High Court Judge)
Born 23.1.1919

Called to Rest 15.9.81.

A Wonderful Daddy so
Loving and Kind
A Charming Smile, a
Heart of Gold
Deep in our Hearts
You will always Stay
Loved and Remembered
Everyday.

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by your wife Arul; children Rohini, Renuka, Rajiv; sons-in-law Vijayan, Sriharan; grandchildren Vasi, Ravi, Prathi, Jayanthy and Ajit.



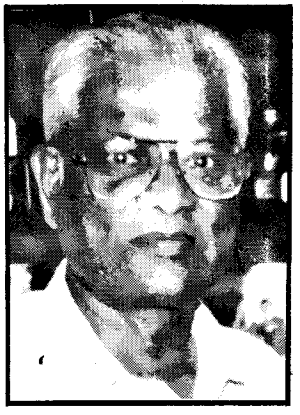
In everloving memory of **Deva Rajan** *N.F.S.I., Licensed Surveyor, Leveller & Valuer of 257 Arasady Road, Kanthermadam, Yarlpanam.*

Fondly remembered on the fourth anniversary of his passing away on 11.9.91 by his beloved wife Pamda: children Sujithan, Siva Kumaran, Rajam, Jeyaraman, Rengan, Raj Iswari; sons-in-law Theventhiran, Nirthanakumaran; daughters-in-law Jeyadevi, Suhanya, Thangalogini, Helen; Grand children Jamuna, Karthika, Bharathan, Uththami, Luxmanan, Sri Ram, Vaitharani, Vithuran, Devarajan and Poorani; sister Saraswathy Panchacharam; brother Punjaksharam; sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, relatives and friends. Flat 4, 24 Mansfield Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 3AZ.

In everloving memory of **Mr. Chelliah Kanthasamy** *(Kaddudai, Manipay) on the seventh anniversary of his passing away on 11.9.88.*

The Happiness and Love you gave are
Precious Memories for us to hold
Memories of you will live with us for ever.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by your wife Pushparanee and children Ranjini, Ranjan, Mohan and Raji. – 58 Magowar Road, Giraween 2145, Australia.



In fond memory of **Mr. M.A. Rasiah** *(Former Head Master, Ilavalai, Ceylon and Teacher at Herts. Tamil School, Watford, U.K.) on the third anniversary of his passing away on 18th September 1992.*

'Appuji, you are always in our hearts and will always be remembered with loads of affection and pride for exactly the man you were in our midst. We pray for our Lord's blessings.'

Mrs. Rasiah (Colombo) and children Sathianathan (Watford), Packiarajah (Colombo), Bhavani (Dubai), Shanker (New Malden), Nandhini (Batticaloa), Logan (Watford), and Rangini (Markham).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

September 26 *6 to 7.30pm. Reading from Century Poets' Anthology at Cenral Library, Chamberlain Sq., Birmingham. Tel: 0121 2353368/3820109.*

October 2 *Saraswathy Pooja: Feast of Guardian Angel.*

Oct. 3 *Vijayathasami.*

Oct. 4 *Eekathasi : Feast of St. Francis.*

Oct. 5 *Feast of St. Bruno.*

Oct. 6 *Pirathosam.*

Oct. 7 *Third Purattasi Sani: Feast of Our Lady of The Rosary:*

Oct. 7 *7.30pm. Jaffna College Alumni Association Annual Dinner & Dance at Lola Jones Hall, Greaves Place Off Garratt Lane, Tooting, London SW17. Tel: 0181 942 6643 (Dr. Thurairatnam).*

Oct. 7 *7.30pm Carnatic Flute Concert by K. Jananayagam accompanied by L. Kothandapani (Violin), I. Somasundaram Desigar (Mirdangam), K. Sithamparanathan (Morsing) and Angelo Kumarathasan (Gatam) at St. Peters Church Hall, Colbeck Road, West Harrow, Middx. Tel: 0181 864 3227.*

Oct. 8 *Full Moon.*

Oct. 9 *Feast of St. Denis.*

Oct. 13 *Feast of St. Edward.*

Oct. 14 *Fourth & Last Purattasi Sani:*

Oct. 14 *7.00pm. Mahajana College Old Students' Association Annual Reunion Dinner & A.G.M. at Holy Cross Convent School Hall, Sandal Road, New Malden, Surrey. Tel: 0181 841 5186/692 5249/395 8573.*

Oct. 20 *Eekathasi: First Iypasi Velli.*

Oct. 21 *Pirathosam.*

Oct. 23 *Amavasai & Deepawali.*

Oct. 24 *Skanda Shashti Viratham starts.*

Oct. 27 *Sathurthi : Second Iypasi Velli.*

Oct. 28 *7.00pm Natha Vidyalaya presents Violin Duet by Sangeetha Vidvan Smit Kalaivani Indrakumar and Selvi Bhayiravi Ganeshwaran at Watersheet Theatre, High Street, Rickmansworth, Herts. in aid of North England Sri Murugan Temple Project. Tel: 01484 640571, 01724 860329, 0181 964 5868/907 6638.*

Oct. 29 *Soora Samkaram.*

Oct. 30 *Thirukalyanam.*

At Bhawan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171-381 3086/ 4608.

Oct. 6 *7.45pm Kathak by Shovana Naravan.*

Oct. 14 *7.00pm Sitar by Shahed Pervez.*

Oct. 15 *6.30pm Carnatic Vocal by Sukanya Prabhakar.*

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J.A.W. Strong (Treasurer)	**0181-723-4626**

Thaamharah's Veena Arangetram

The Veena Arangetram of **Thaamharah**, *daughter of Dr. & Dr. Mrs. Mahendrayogam of Newbury Park, Ilford took place at the Sir James Hawkey Hall, Woodford Green on 27th August. It was a fascinating performance by thirteen year old Thaamharah disciple of Smt Rudrani Balakrishnan. The highlight of the Arangetram was the Ragam, Thanam Pallavi in Karaharapriya Raga which was par excellence. Rudrani deserves to be highly complimented for having presented a splendid Veena Arangetram.*

The Accompanists were Sri Muttu Sivarajah – Mridangam, Sri Arunasalam Ganathan – Ghatam, Sri Kandiah Sithamparanathan – Morsing and Sri Hiran Chatterjee – Tabla.

P. Sukumaran.

Shobana's Successful Arangetram

The Natya Arangetram of **Shobana**, *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Balaratnam at the Logan Hall on 9th September had many plus points: reasonable time control, fair selection of repertoire, good orchestra with a brilliant vocal support. The debutante Shobana went through the score as expected of her with an ease and precision which revealed her conscious training. An earlier acquaintance with Western ballet has definitely helped in her intended karana type of stances. Appropriately Miss Gypsy Booth, principal of a Ballet school, who was the Chief Guest at the function, beautifully analysed the difference between the ballet and Bharatanatyam and praised the oriental art form for its grace and content.*

It was the usual repertoire, just the minimum required to bring out every variety of Adavu and Abhinaya (although the Ardhamandali or Araimandi did not come out to the fore), with a Dasavatharam and a light tripping Panthaattam thrown in to add variety. The usual Alarippu in this programme was embellished by a Thiruppukal, sung by the vocalist Rajasekaran of Madras in the nattuvanga style which added flavour. The jathis rendered in this by Shobana's Guru Selvaluxmy Ramakrishnan unfortunately did not synchronise due to unsteady pitch. This reflected in the Varnam too. One is led to the thought that these jathis too could have been left with Rajasekaran who is specialised in the field of conducting Nattuvangam.

The Sabdam in Tamil on the usual Krishna theme gave plenty of scope for Shobana to display her abhinaya equipments as available in plenty in the Bhagavatha mythology. (As a matter of academic interest one is tempted to ask some of the composers of new Sabdam pieces, what is compelling them to imitate the same style and format – same ragamalika and Misrachapu talam as originally set by somebody to the well known Sarasijakshulu composition. Musicologists may ponder). The Varnam in Neelambari on Muruga theme was superbly sung by Rajasekaran and the sancharibhava illustrations on the exploits of the younger son of Shiva were well delineated by Shobana in this. She executed a variety of stylistic poses along with appropriate gestures in this. In the ball game Panthaattam, a gift, we believe, from Kalakshetra through Krishnaveni Lakshman, of Madras, Shobana was in her elements. In the Dasavatharam piece the ten Avathars of Mahavishnu were well presented though a little hurriedly.

On the whole it was an Arangetram to stay in mind for Shobana's clean execution, Selvalakshmi's moulding and reshaping, superb music of Rajasekaran, Bhavani Shankar's electrifying Mridangam artistry, Chandrasekar's caressing violin play and Nirmlaraj's valiant effort in successfully holding the sruti in his bhari flute.

– Sivapatha Sundaram.

Kalabhavanam Hits a Jackpot

In the monthly chamber music concert series **Kalabhavanam** *faced a short lull but hit a jackpot on 10th September with the appearance of two brilliant musicians from Bangalore – versatile vocalist Chandrika and mesmeric violinist Jyotsna – a delightful pair full of verve and cheer. Music for them is part of joyful life, unencumbered by professional formalities. Their visit to London was to provide music for the Mridanga Arangetram of two young boys trained by Mridanga maestro R.N. Prakash, another Bangalorean. It was he, who being a friend of Kalabhavanam, organised to bring the Karnataka sisters to Kalabhavanam that day.*

Kalabhavanam which has a reputation for providing high brow Carnatic music to lovers of art in the Croydon area, was doubly pleased at the performance of Chandrika and Jyotsna – the 'crescent moon' and the 'evening twilight'. The two and a half hour session of captivating music by these two cheerful young artistes stunned the audience in the compact Willis Road auditorium. Chandrika's vocal range, her brigas, swara groupings and Jyotsna's glides on the strings, immaculate hold on laya and microtonal trills were intoxicant. These two young ladies have won the hearts of Kalabhavanam membership immensely. R.N. Prakash providing rhythm on the Ghatam, while his student Kavin Satchitanandam handled the mridangam. Chandrika is a double graduate and a staff artiste of A.I.R. Bangalore and Jyotsna is an M.B.B.S., intending to specialise in Ophthalmology.

Julie Dharshini's Bharathanatya Arangetram

Julie Dharshini *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Naveenathayalan of Greenford and Disciple of Smt Pathmini Gunaseelan, Director, Narthana Kalalaya had her Bharatha Natya Arangetram on 2.9.95 at the Assembly Hall, Walthamstow, London E17. Clr. Derek Arnold, Deputy Mayor of London Borough of Waltham Forest and Mrs. Patricia Arnold were the Chief Guests. The piece of note was the Varnam 'Anname aruke vaa' which*

the debutante performed with skill in Abinaya, Thala and execution of Adava Jatis. The accompanists were Smt Pathmini Gunaseelan (Nattuvangam), Smt Prema Naveenathayalan – Julie's mother (Vocal), Smt Arunthathy Ratnasingham – Julie's aunt (Violin), Nathamani Muthu Sivarajah (Miruthangam), Sri P. Gnanavarathan (Flute), Sri A. Gananathan (Gadam) and Sri Kandiah Sithamparanathan (Morsing). Sangeetha Bhooshanam Pon Subaschandran who had come all the way from Norway was the additional vocalist.

Herts Tamil School (UK)

The Annual Prize giving of Herts Tamil School (based at Parkgate Junior School, Watford, Herts on Sundays) will be held at the Multi Racial Community Centre, Durban Road West, Watford on 30th September 1995 at 6.30pm.

Mrs. Puvaneswary Elampooranar, *wife of the late Mr. V.E. Elampooranar (Key founder of Herts Tamil School) will be the Chief Guest at the above event which will be preceded by Saraswathie Poojah celebrations and children's performances. Admission free and all are welcome. Tel: 01923 466751/462842/662811.*

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